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Placing Place Names in Norwegian Archaeology

Current Discussions and future Perspectives

Sofie Laurine Albris (ed.)



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

14
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Northern Rogaland and southern Vestland mapped by Joannes Janssonius in 1636. Public Domain.

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Preface

In 2019, I started the research project ArcNames at the University of Bergen. One of the defined goals of the project was to revive interdisciplinary discussions between archaeology and onomastics in Norway.

The discipline of onomastics is being cut down at most Norwegian universities and only few specialised onomastic researchers remain. Meanwhile, archaeological discoveries are forwarding new understandings of the settlement history in Norway, encouraging us to re-evaluate traditional views on the place name material. The need for an informed dialogue between onomastics and archaeology is growing with the constantly expanding knowledge about landscape and settlement. The application of place name material in archaeology, however, is a debated issue in Norway.

Onomastics has a lot to offer archaeology, and vice versa, and collaboration between the two disciplines could be better facilitated. All the Norwegian archival material related to place names has recently been gathered in the Language Collections at the University of Bergen, creating a new basis for revitalizing place name research in Norway. In this context, I arranged an interdisciplinary seminar at the University of Bergen on October 20, 2020. The aim was to bring together researchers from both onomastic and archaeology working with toponymy in the Norwegian Iron and Viking Age landscape to discuss the status and perspectives of place names in Norwegian archaeology and to bring attention to current problematics, particularly the reduced capacities in the onomastic discipline. The workshop had presenters from various Norwegian institutions addressing the relevance and use of place names in archaeology today and discussing problems and limitations, in addition to exploring future possibilities in this line of research.

Several of the speakers agreed to contribute with written articles. With some additional papers, the result is this collection of articles presenting various perspectives on the use of place names in relation to archaeology in Norway. I am very grateful to all the authors for taking time to contribute to this volume.

This collection of papers serves to illustrate how place names have a continued relevance to archaeology both in and beyond Norway. Views on the material differ and the evidence may seem incoherent, but this should rather encourage interdisciplinary studies than discourage them. Using place names and archaeology in combination has a long range of methodological implications, and it also calls for qualified theoretical discussions, something that has been lacking in traditional research.

Sofie Laurine Albris and Krister SK Vasshus introduce the topic of interdisciplinary work between archaeology and onomastics, giving an overview of the key themes covered in the book and in research history. The paper further discusses the theoretical perspectives in combining two such different source materials as archaeology and place names.

Peder Gammeltoft uses new digitized mappings of the main types of Norwegian settlement names to address settlement patterns in Norway from a macro perspective.

Geir Grønnesby discusses the observed differences in settlement structure between the Early and Late Iron Age in Norway and their implications for our understanding of place names, particularly from a theoretical perspective. The article proposes that the fundamental relationship between people and landscape changed significantly at the end of the 6th century, with significant impact on landscape experience and naming practises.

Per Vikstrand evaluates the linguistic and archaeological evidence of plural tuna-names in Norway. In the Iron Age, plural tuna-names have clear connections with centrality in Central Sweden and are part of a prestigious vocabulary connected with centrality during the Iron Age. Vikstrand concludes that only Tune in Østfold is a clear representative of this type of place name in Norway.

Kjetil Loftsgarden uses a quantitative approach to the place name element *skeid* throughout Norway. The name localities are evaluated in combination with archaeological and historical sources and likely sites of skeid-assemblies are identified and discussed.

Birgit Maixner uses place names in combination with archaeological and topographical evidence to identify and evaluate components of centres of power in the coastal landscape of northern Trøndelag in Central Norway.

Håkon Reiersen and Christopher Fredrik Kvæstad present a detailed analysis of the Iron Age and Medieval portage at Haraldseid in southwest Norway. The article combines place names, early maps, historical and archaeological evidence, to demonstrate the strategic importance of the site and suggests that there is a core of truth in local legends, associating it with the Viking king Haraldr Fairhair.

Dikka Storm studies the Sámi settlement Stuorgieddi on the island of Innasuoilu in Southern Troms. The local Sámi place names have gone through a process of Norwegianization and translation into Norwegian until work has been in recent decades done to recreate and restore Sámi place names according to the Place Names Act of 1990. The article demonstrates how the local Sámi place names reflect the economy and use of cultural and social space as well as the close connections between people, their activities and place names at Stuorgieddi.

I want to thank the UBAS editorial group and the anonymous peer reviewers for their assistance in editing and reviewing the chapters. Thanks especially to Randi Barndon, who served as the supervisor of the ArcNames project for encouraging me to put the book together. I also thank AHKR (department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion) at the University of Bergen and the University Museum of Bergen for their administrative assistance with the publication.

Both the seminar and this publication were put together as a part of the research project *ArcNames. Individuals, social identities and archetypes – the oldest Scandinavian personal names in an archaeological light*, funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. The project research focused on personal names and individual identities in the Scandinavian Iron Age from an archaeological point of view. The project was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie individual fellowship under grant agreement No. 797386, running from March 2019 to June 2021 and hosted at the University of Bergen at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion.

Sofie Laurine Albris

National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, January 2023



Geir Grønnesby

Settlements without names, names without settlements – and the transformation to an occupied landscape

*Archaeological settlement surveys have shown marked differences in the settlement structure between the Early and Late Iron Age. The historic Norwegian farm seems to be established at the end of the 6th century. This has consequences for the way we look at farm names. If the historical farms did not exist in the Early Iron Age, what were the 'farm names' in the Early Iron Age? The starting point for the discussion is that the relationship between people and landscape must have changed significantly at the end of the 6th century. The article discusses this by looking at how the landscape was used and experienced. While the Late Iron Age landscape was divided into properties and thus had a cell structure, the landscape of the Early Iron Age can be seen as a landscape defined and experienced through the movement between places defined by the practices that have taken place in these places. The differences between these two ways of experiencing the landscape mean that the practice of naming places must have been different. The terms *chronotope* and *praxiotope* are used to describe these two different ways of naming places. The theoretical starting point is symmetrical archaeology and practice theory.*

Introduction

Place name research in Norway dates back to the 19th century and has concentrated on farm names. A common assumption is that some of the present-day farms' names have been names of farms since the Early Iron Age or possibly earlier. However, although some researchers have explicitly stated that some farm names had different origins (e.g. names relating to nature) (Olsen 1926, p. 56, Stemshaug 1985, p. 90), this has not been thoroughly discussed.

Archaeological traces of occupation dating from the Early Iron Age (BC 500-AD 550) in Trøndelag, Norway have been found over large areas in fields surrounding present-day farmyards. These are in marked contrast to the settlements of the historical farms, which in many cases have occupied the same places since the end of the 6th century. This is evident by culture layers on most studied farmyards from this period onwards (Grønnesby 2013, 2015, 2016, Grønnesby and Heen-Pettersen 2015).

This situation raises the question of what the farm names were before the historical farms were established. This question is tied to the way we classify the Early Iron Age settlement (i.e. before AD 550).

This article will discuss the differences in settlement structure between the Early and Late Iron Age and the consequences for how we look at the presumed farm names. I will use a perspective taken from symmetrical anthropology and regard the landscape as a hybrid (Latour 1996). I will combine this with practice theory as designed by Shove *et al.* (2012). Terms like *inscription*, *chronotope* and *praxiotope* will be central to the analysis.

Research history

Place name research

Since the 19th century, place name research in Norway has been broadly interdisciplinary, closely linked to studies of settlement history and Norse religion (Særheim 2013, p. 553). The earliest research relating to place names was initially conducted as part of the national project: the process of creating a legitimate basis for Norway as a nation. Already in the early 19th century, Wilhelm Frimann Koren Christie was of the opinion that place name research was a national task (Stemshaug 1985, p. 16). However, the most important person in Norwegian place name research was the archaeologist, historian and philologist Oluf Rygh. The impact of Rygh's work is demonstrated by Ola Stemshaug's subdivision of place name research into three epochs: before Rygh, during Rygh, and after Rygh (Stemshaug 1985, p. 15 ff.). Rygh started the monumental task of collecting and interpreting all farm names in Norway for his reference work *Norske gaardnavne* (Norwegian farm names, see also Gammeltoft, this volume).

However, the connection between farm names and archaeological traces of occupation was not firmly recognised until the 1920s, when archaeologists, particularly Anton Wilhelm Brøgger, established archaeology as part of the national project (Brøgger 1925, Grønnesby and Heen-Pettersen 2015, Grønnesby 2019, p. 34f). In common with Brøgger, archaeologists such as Sigurd Grieg (1926a, 1926b, 1934, 1938) and Helge Gjessing (1921, 1925) had works published in which they combined the results of archaeological surveys of settlements with place names. In the following years, the link between archaeology, farms, and place names was strengthened even further (Grønnesby and Heen Pettersen 2015, p. 171ff, Grønnesby 2019, p. 34). In Norwegian archaeology, it has been commonly assumed that there was a connection between farm names and burial mounds (Haavaldsen 1984, Pilø 2005, p. 51). The mounds and the finds in them could date both the farms and place names in areas where there were no archaeological traces of settlements. However, this assumed link between farms, names, and burials is problematic because it presupposes that there has been continuity in the use of farms, names and hence that the relationship between burial finds and settlements has remained consistent.

Until large-scale surface excavation was used as a method during the 1980s and 1990s, settlements from the Migration Period (AD 400-550) in south-west Norway were the primary source of information about Early Iron Age settlements in south-west Norway. Elsewhere in the country, farm names, burial finds, and retrospective methods were regarded as indicative of the development of settlements (Gjerpe 2014).

The problems associated with dating farm names in Norway make it difficult to decide which names can be dated to the Early Iron Age, although some seem to be more reliable than others. These include simplex nature names such as *Berg*, *Dahl* and so on, and compound names combined with the endings *-vin* (pasture), *-heim* (home), *-bøl-by* (to dwell) (in Norway, the simplex name *By* is used on individual farms and is interpreted as being as old as the simplex nature names (Stemshaug 1985, p. 110)). While the latter two can be traced back to the activity 'to dwell' or 'to stay in a place', the *-vin* element can be traced back to livestock grazing. All four elements can be regarded as descriptive of significant activities (Stemshaug 1985).

The simplex names related to nature can be linked back to prominent topographical features. In traditional societies, such places can be spiritual in nature by virtue of their formation and the way they appear to influence human behaviour. Usually, myths, stories, and songs are linked to such places, which in turn are placed within a larger cosmology (Basso 1996, Oetelar and Oetelar 2006). If their names survived a sufficiently long time and were 'translated' into farm names, it must have been because they were significant places where important events took place. However, name elements such as *berg* (mountain), *ås* (ridge), and *dal* (valley) may not have been names but could instead have been appellatives (Neumüller 2012).

Edmund Leach has characterised place name research as 'butterfly collecting', since researchers have collected and catalogued names in order to determine their etymological significance (Leach 1961). However, the development that occurred in international place name research during the 1990s has been described as a critical turn since the focus shifted from the etymological to the social and political aspects of place names. This approach was partly based on modern situations, such as circumstances in the wake of war and conflict (Rose-Redwood *et al.* 2010, p. 457). Another focus has been on the landscape as socially constructed, whereby people have used place names to think 'with' the landscape, not 'about' the landscape. Place names have thus come to be seen as written into a landscape that existed within major cultural narratives and helped people make moral and political judgements (Rose-Redwood *et al.* 2010, p. 458). Thus, place names were symbolic texts intertwined with larger systems of meaning and ideology that were read, interpreted, and acted upon by humans. The socially constructed landscape was seen as a form of ideology wherein the main purpose was to control meaning and channel it in particular directions (Alderman 2008, p. 199).

The concept of landscape as socially constructed became popular in post-processual archaeology. In particular, Christopher Tilley's book *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (1994) has been of great importance. Tilley's perception of the landscape as based on phenomenology sees 'space' as meaningful in relation to human actions (see also Albris, this volume). Thus, a landscape is a set of named, relational places that form part of a system in which the social is reproduced, transformed, and structured (Tilley 1994, p. 29).

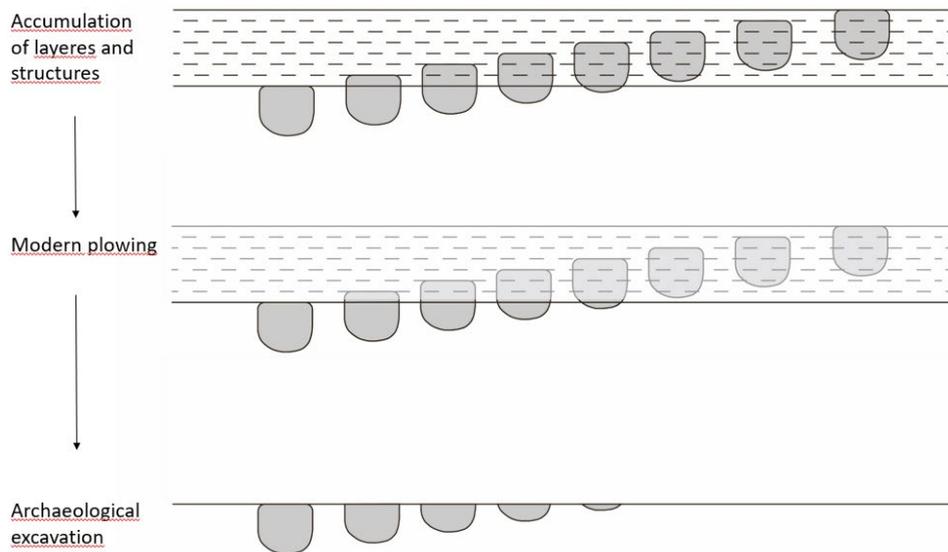


Figure 1. Sketch showing how layers in the soil accumulate over a long period of time and that what we excavate is only part of a site's history. Illustration: Geir Grønnesby, NTNU University Museum.

Settlement archaeology in the Early and Late Iron Age

Since the 1980s and 90s, archaeologists in Norway have uncovered an enormous number of house structures from the Iron Age. There exists no summary of the material, but it seems like the vast majority of these are dated to the Early Iron Age, i.e. up to approximately AD 550. These are large-scale surface excavations that involve removing the ploughing layer to uncover the underground. In the underground, we find a vast number of post-holes and cooking-pits. Traces of settlement are spread over large areas. Some houses lie alone, some overlap, while others group together. However, there are always a large number of post holes without any context. The ^{14}C -dates also show a larger time span than that indicated by the houses. The question is, what are these post holes and in what context do they belong? I think the answer to this lies in the so-called *dyrkningslag* (literally 'cultivation layers') dated to the Early Iron Age. These layers are often treated as layers created by ploughing. In reality, they are layers created by the ard (or scratch plough). The ard is not equipped with a mould board and does not turn the soil as the plough. In several excavations, we have detected a large number of cooking pits in these layers. In one excavation, we found a sequence of five cooking-pits lying on top of each other. The five cooking-pits were dated from the Pre-roman Iron Age to the Migration Period (Grønnesby 2019, p. 158). We have also found graves and post-holes. This means that these layers are created in an alternation between cultivation and other activity, for example, settlement activity (Fig. 1). This has profound consequences for how we look at settlement and land use in the Early Iron Age.

It seems as though settlements in the Early Iron Age had a more labile character. I follow Tim Ingold (1986) and distinguish between settlements, which are stable because ownership of land is practised, and on the other hand, what I have called labile societies. In labile societies, there is a continuum between a high degree of mobility and a high degree of stability in the settlement. Pastoral nomads are typically labile societies (Grønnesby 2019, p. 131ff).

According to Ingold, there are two forms of sedentism, and one of these occurs when there is a shift in the balance between livestock farming and agricultural farming (Ingold 1986). This may be a temporary form of sedentism that can shift back to increased mobility, and in the context of the present study, it can be referred to as ‘unbounded sedentism’ and therefore be included in the concept of mobility as a time-limited practice of sedentism. The second, more fundamental form of sedentism – ‘bounded sedentism’ – occurs when structural change happens in production factors, namely when there is a shift in emphasis from mobile wealth (in the form of livestock) to land ownership. The fundamental difference between these two forms of sedentism is that in the case of unbound sedentism, the settlement is not anchored in the topography in the same way as in bounded sedentism. In this article, I will use the term *labile* for societies in the Early Iron Age since it captures the continuum between a high degree of mobility and a high degree of sedentism (Fig. 2).

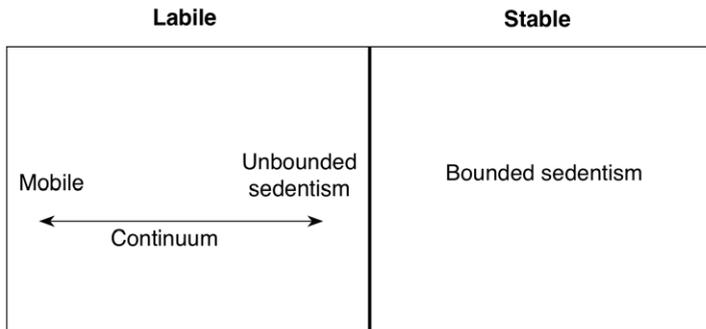


Figure 2. Illustration: Geir Grønnesby NTNU University Museum.

Settlements are not the only traces of people in Trøndelag. We also find burial grounds, hill forts, boathouses, caves and rock shelters, and places for iron extraction. Settlements in the Early Iron Age in Trøndelag seem to have been settlements with a high degree of unbound sedentism. Many of the houses seem to have had a high age and may have been used for a long time. This type of unbound sedentism may have been caused by economic conditions. Shifting the centre of gravity between agriculture and livestock is part of the strategy of *labile* groups. One can feed more people per square meter with agriculture than with animal husbandry. Agricultural systems are also more stable (Cribb 1991, p. 23-44). We do not know the nature of this type of settlement and do not know if everyone lived in the same place at the same time. Perhaps parts of the population lived in permanent settlements, while others wandered around. Maybe places like hill forts, caves, and rock shelters should be seen in conjunction with this way of organizing the landscape.

The Danish archaeologist Jesper Hansen has seen a similar development from the *labile* to the stable around AD 600 on Funen. In the period up to the 6th century, Hansen characterizes the settlement as *labile* because it is not possible to trace permanent property boundaries. From the 7th century, significant changes occur as the farms move together into villages that form a settlement structure that is the origin of the structure still seen in the oldest settlements on Funen (Hansen 2015, 2017).

The Norwegian farm and the farmer have been vital in the formation of the Norwegian national identity (Opedal 1999, Gjerpe 2014). Historians and archaeologists in the 19th and

20th centuries explicitly used the farm and the farming society to give Norway a history. To achieve this, they used retrogressive methods whereby conditions in present society explained past societies. One consequence of this was that the farm, as a social, economic and political institution, became central in explaining early agricultural society. Since early farming society was part of our history, it was difficult to envision a society different from the historical peasant society. The association between history/archaeology and the farming society as a national identity indicator became so strong that the farm became what Bruno Latour calls a black box (Latour 1987, p. 3). The term ‘black box’ refers to statements that are not questioned; it is used about statements that are perceived as scientific truths. The term ‘gård’ was self-explanatory and could be used without further discussion. The problem is that connotations of the word *gård* (farm) are activated when used in prehistoric situations. The concept of land as property and the fact that property was transferred down through the generations via the *odel* (allodial system) became crucial to the way settlement in the Early Iron Age was envisioned. The society in the Early Iron Age was essentially the same as the society in the Late Iron Age. The difference was primarily a difference in complexity.

Excavations in recent years have revealed that there are profound archaeological differences between settlements in the Early Iron Age and that of the Late Iron Age. First, the cultivation layers (*dyrkningslag*) from the Early Iron Age might indicate that settlements had a labile character in this period. Second, cultural layers on the historical farm’s farmyards show a high degree of stability, which settlement in the Early Iron Age lacks. These layers are documented in about 70 farmyards in Trøndelag. About 50 are dated between AD 550–1600. These layers are stratified layers of a vast amount of fire-cracked stones. One source calls these layers *bryggestein* (literally ‘brewing stones’). Possibly because the rocks were used for brewing beer (Grønnesby 2016) (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Cultural layer from a farmyard at Ranheim (Vik) outside Trondheim. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

So, there is a profound difference between settlement in the Early Iron Age and the Late Iron Age. While the Late Iron Age farms have been situated on the same spots for centuries and can be characterised as stable, the Early Iron Age settlement seems to have a labile character.

This change should probably be seen as a transformation to a society where land was property. When you own a specific piece of land, you will find the best spot for your houses. If there is no reason to move the houses, they will stay in the same place for centuries.

If this is right, it must also have consequences for the way we see the farm names. Societies that do not practice the principle of ownership of land will be organised in other ways in terms of politics, society, and religion. The relationship between people and land will be completely different (Grønnesby 2019).

Theoretical background – symmetrical anthropology and practice theory

In this article, I will look at the critique emerging from symmetrical anthropology and archaeology. This critique affects not only phenomenological landscape analysis but also the humanities in general. It concerns the ontological division between nature and culture that dates back to the work of philosophers such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes (Possamai 2013). According to Bruno Latour, this division was a hallmark of modernisation. In order to understand and analyse the world, the world had to be purified (or subdivided) into ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ (Latour 1993). One result of this purification process was an ontology whereby reality consists of two distinct worlds: the subjective human world and the physical material world. This created a distinction between the modern (us) and the non-modern (traditional communities) – the great divide. This distinction has been particularly in focus in the humanities and formed part of the basis of both processual and post-processual archaeology. Post-processual archaeology has been criticised for reducing the physical world to a passive background for human action. The human world has been seen as socially constructed, and the terms ‘culture’ and ‘society’ have been defined solely from a social constructionist point of departure (Olsen 2010, p. 5 ff.). The physical world itself was thus emptied of meaning in favour of a social construction. In particular, textual analogues were used to ‘read’ material culture (Olsen 2010, p. 39 ff.). The problem with this starting point is the absence of the material world or objects as active participants in human lives. The difference between objects and texts was ignored. However, the presence of objects in our lives is constituted in ways other than through texts. To see objects or the physical world as a text is to disregard their distinctive character and their ability to have repercussions on human action (Olsen 2010, p. 59-60).

According to Latour, we live in a world in which materials and humans are continually overlapping (Latour 1993). In practical daily life, we are in constant relationships with non-humans. Thus, the idea of a two-part ontological world does not exist in our daily activities. Rather, our entire existence is dominated by overlaps between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. The scale of this process has escalated since the Industrial Revolution. We have never been so dependent on things (i.e. objects) as today, which is why Latour claims that we have never really been modern (Olsen 2010, p. 101 ff.). Latour uses the concept of hybrids to denote the overlapping of nature and culture and the term actant (a reworking of the term actor) to describe how the nodes in a network can be both humans and non-humans.

In this line of thinking, the object – in this case the landscape – is attributed an active role in how people act. The landscape will have inscriptions – landscape forms or topography – that will act on human behaviour to a greater or lesser extent. In this context, the inscription refers to how the landscape topography will generate certain patterns of action. Inscriptions may be strong or weak, which means that place names cannot be seen as human social constructions but as actants in a network with both humans and landscape. The networks will help stabilise place names as objects and ensure a shared understanding of what place names represent.

To understand how humans behave in relation to the landscape, I will use practise theory as designed by Shove *et al.* (2012). Practise theory has also been used by Sofie Laurine Albris, who sees archaeological objects, place names and landscape in relation to human practices (2014, see also Albris, this volume). While Latour stresses that we have to follow the actants in the networks (1987), Shove *et al.* say that we have to follow the elements in practice to study a controversy (2012, p. 22). The reason we can combine symmetrical archaeology and practice theory is that material is an element in practice. ‘Social relationships’ are inherent in what they call ‘the hardware of daily life’.

Practice consists of three elements: material, competence and meaning (Fig. 4). Materials are defined as everything material: objects, infrastructure, the body and the landscape. Competence is defined as all forms of understanding and practical knowledge, while meaning is seen as all that is socially meaningful at any given time. ‘Social life’ is created in an interplay between material, the meaning we put in it and the competence needed. When an action occurs, all three elements are activated and in Shove *et al.*’s terminology, bonds are formed between them. Elements can be combined in many different ways and thus create different practices. Practice arises, is maintained and disappears as the bonds between the elements are formed and broken.

New practices arise when old or new elements are combined in new combinations. When the bonds between the elements are broken, the elements can survive for a certain time. Materials that cease to be an element of a practice will eventually disappear since no materials last forever, but they can also be part of new practices.

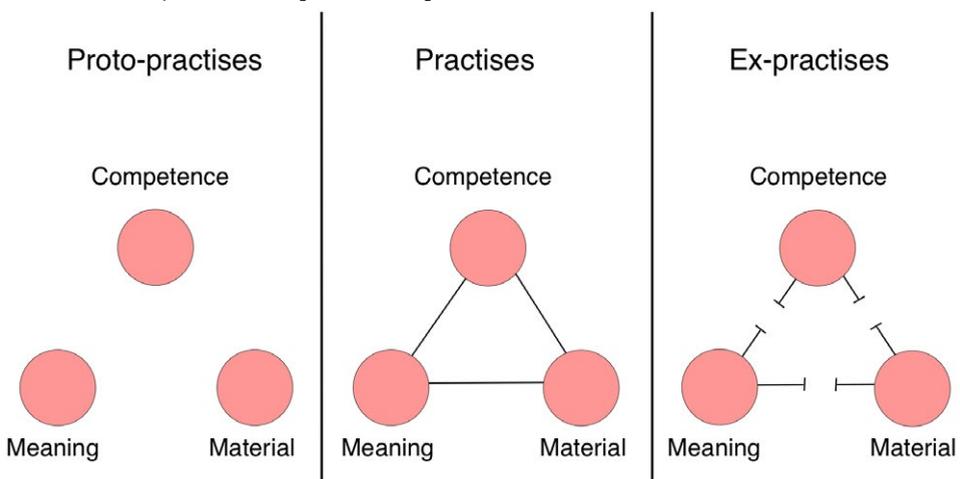


Figure 4. The figure shows how practice consists of the elements competence, meaning and materials. After Shove *et al.* 2012, fig. 2.

Different practices can establish connections in that co-location is an essential part of practices. Shove *et al.* denote such practices ‘practice clusters’ and ‘practice complexes’ (2012, p. 81ff). The difference between these is that practice complexes form closer connections than clusters. Co-location is not the only requirement for forming clusters or complexes. The way the material practice elements are organised in relation to each other can be important for how practices are linked (2012, p. 83f). The same goes for sequences and synchronisation of practices. The many practices in a hospital require co-location but are also about how the physical elements are organised in relationships with each other, as well as the order and synchronisation of the practices. Practice is something that takes place in a given place at a given time and cannot move. The elements, however, may move. The most obvious is that materials can be moved by transportation. However, the landscape can not be transported or moved. It is more complicated to understand how meaning and competence move. Competence moves through processes of decontextualisation and recontextualisation. This implies that competence must be abstracted from its local point of departure and reversed to one recipient situation. This presupposes a distinction between local competence and cosmopolitan competence. Cosmopolitan competence is detached from its local origins. This implies an understanding that knowledge can exist in a dislocated reservoir, an epistemic community where users can gain expertise. In modern society, it is possible to see that both libraries and the internet can function as such a cosmopolitan reservoir of competence, but in societies where writing is poorly developed, this reservoir is left to memory and to some common perceptions of what competence consists of. The ability to move competence involves the ability to acquire cosmopolitan competence and decode the competence in a new practice situation. Meaning can move through processes of packing and unpacking, association and reclassification. Shove *et al.* claims that the possibility of associations and reclassification is limited and made possible by both existing patterns and distribution of opinion (2012, p. 55). This means that not all meaning, and competence, can be moved, and this entails that meaning and competence that is moved must be linked to existing local practice elements so that the transfer can occur. In this transfer, meaning and competence are transformed in that the elements of meaning and competence are connected with new practice elements. All the elements depend on an infrastructure to move. In a non-writing society, movement of the elements will depend on the movement of people and objects. Since the transition from the Early to the Late Iron Age was a period where both people and things seem to have been moving over large areas, this is an approach that can say something about how the actors (or practice elements) moved in the networks. It also says something about how the relationship between mobile actants and non-mobile actants (landscape) worked. A place can be seen as an element in practice and in combination with a lot of other practices.

The two theories are complementary in that symmetrical archaeology shows how humans and landscapes work in the same networks and how the landscape, through both natural and human-made inscriptions, acts on human practice. Practice theory is helpful because it connects places in the landscape and people through practice.

I will use symmetrical archaeology and the concept of chronotope to discuss farm names in the Late Iron Age and practice theory and the concept of praxiotope to discuss the same names in the Early Iron Age.

Names

The farm name as a chronotope – the historical farm

Russian literature writer Mikhail Bakhtin adopted the term chronotope (meaning time-space) from physics and used it to describe how time and space can be combined in one concept (Olsen 2010, p. 108). Keith Basso later used chronotope to describe how places functioned in apache mythology. Basso describes chronotopes as ‘points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation...’ (Basso 1984, p. 44). Stefan Brink has used chronotope in the sense of ‘historically meaningful places’ (Brink 2008). This article will use chronotope to describe how Norwegian farm names were used to anchor land property in the landscape by combining time and space through inscriptions in the landscape.

The historical farm should be understood as a specific political, economic, and social organisation. Its main characteristic is that it was based on ownership rights to a defined piece of land. In Norway, these rights were transferred from generation to generation through the hereditary right of ownership known as *odelsrett* (allodial entitlement). Due to the connotations that the term *gård* (farm) has in terms of Norwegian national identity, it should not be applied in the context of the Early Iron Age settlement (Holm 1999, Grønnesby and Heen-Pettersen 2015).

In Norwegian, the term *gård* is linguistically related to the term *gjerde* (fence) and has the same semantic origin (Bjorvand and Lindeman 2000, p. 332, Falk and Torp 1991, p. 230). The explanation for the derivation of the appellative *gård* from the original meaning ‘fence’ is likely due to the fact that, as a boundary, the fence was crucial for defining what constituted the farm (see also Vikstrand, this volume). Essentially, each farm had physical limits, and these boundaries were decisive for people’s access to resources, determined the nature of relationships with people outside the farm, and also defining those who lived and worked on the farm. This means that the main distinctive feature of the appellative *gård* is its spatial delineation. Hence, the settlement itself was not the most important factor, but rather its boundaries. The expression *Gardr er grana settir* (fences keep neighbours satisfied) from the Gulating law is a nice expression of the importance of fences/borders (Robberstad 1981, p. 109). This also means that the settlement and its name were anchored in the defined territory. By anchored, I mean that the name and the territory were inextricably interlinked.

Over the generations, the right to the land, or farm, was regulated through the hereditary right of ownership (*odelsrett*). It is believed that the word *odel* is an old word originating in the earliest runic alphabet, an assumption based on sources dating from the Middle Ages (Spurkland 2001, p. 20). The word *odel* is found on runic inscriptions dating from the Late Viking Age, in which it relates to property. The concept *odelshaug* (literally *odels mound*) and a legal case dating from the 1300s, which stated that a property belonged to the person who could trace his ancestors back to *hauk ok beidni* (literally “gravemound and heathendom”), thus indicating that some burial mounds had a legitimising role in relation to property rights (Zachrisson 1994, 2017). There is much evidence to indicate that the *odelshaug* was located relatively close to the farmyard, at least in some parts of the country (Grønnesby 2019, p. 196). The hereditary right of ownership and its manifestation in the *odelshaug* covered the temporal aspect of the farm. The owner legitimised his/her right to the farm by referring to the relationship to the ancestor in the burial mounds.

Thus, farm names linked the inscriptions *boundaries* and *odelshaug* in time and space - as a chronotope (Fig. 5). As inscriptions, both the boundaries and the mound were part of a relational network that over time translated the object *gård* into an unquestionable fact through a process of black boxing (Latour 1987). At the core of this process, the farm names linked the physical landscape to human behaviour. In Trøndelag, there are no traces of the original boundaries. By contrast, in Sweden, buried hoards and rune stones may have been used to mark boundaries (Zachrisson 1998). Regardless of how they were marked in the landscape, the boundaries must be seen as very strong inscriptions. This is illustrated by the Gulating law's punishment for removing boundary stones (Robberstad 1981 chapter 18). In parts of Norway, there are stories about people being punished after death as ghosts for having moved the border stones (Jacobsen 2002).

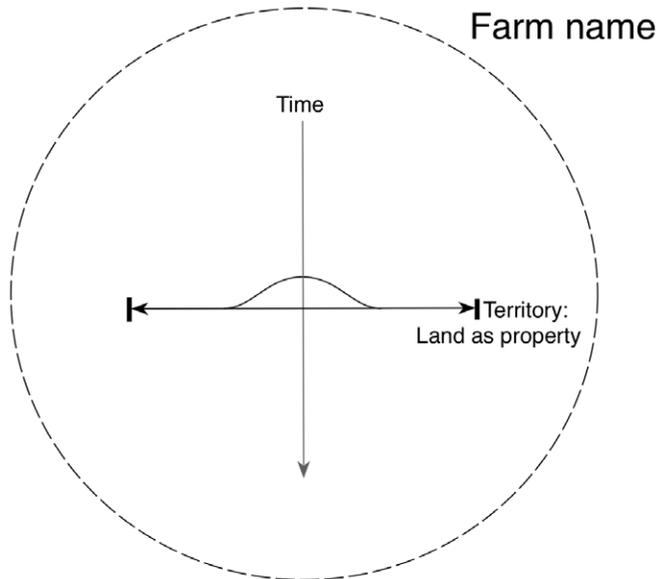


Figure 5. By uniting time and space through the inscriptions border and odels-mound, the farm names, as a chronotope, helped anchor the land property. Ill: Geir Grønnesby, NTNU University Museum.

The path and the praxiotope – the Early Iron Age

In a labile society that does not practice land ownership, the relationship between humans and the landscape must have been very different. I will follow Paul Lane (2016) and first use the concept of ‘path’ to emphasise movements in the landscape. Second, I will suggest that places were identified by what was done or practised in different places.

In most labile groups, houses/tents/huts are bound by rules, whereby all objects and people have a fixed place, and the organisation of the house/tent/hut reflects a cosmological order. Through the formalised structure, a structured space is constructed and reconstructed in the same way, regardless of the physical relocation (Prussin 1995, p. 42, Mauvieux *et al.* 2014, Lane 2016, p. 210-213). For labile groups, ‘home’ is not a temporary place, even though it is moved, but is instead a stable and constant entity that is materialised in the form of a mobile home. ‘Home’ is, therefore, not a physical place, but a social and physical space that

is produced and reproduced with each new arrangement (Prussin 1995, p. 42). Although the group moves as a whole, the individual group members will still be in the same 'space'. Upon arrival at a new campsite, each Turkana will take some soil in his/her mouth and forehead to unite man and land (Broch-Due 2000: 60ff). Paul Lane calls the home a portable mnemonic aid (Lane 2016, p. 210). Hence, dwellings can be seen as portable inscriptions.

Mobility or movement in the landscape is part of a human cognitive experience. Accordingly, we should think about the landscape in the context of mobility or as points and movements between those points (Prussin 1995). The Turkana people in Kenya use the term 'path' as an analogy for social strategies. The physical pathways or routes along which the different households choose to drive their animals are also social paths. The choices that determine where people take their animals are strategic social and economic choices that can be successful or less successful. The Turkana expression 'to make paths' means to make the right choices. Accordingly, a poor person will be characterised by their inability to 'make paths'. Thus, paths are expressions of the movements in a landscape with a network of relationships with the potential for social and economic transactions (Broch-Due 1999).

Western humanities in general, and possibly archaeology in particular, have had a tendency to think in terms of localities and place. Paul Lane is one of the few scholars who have extensively examined how landscape archaeology can be based on mobility and the concept of 'path' as an alternative to the dominant place-centred landscape theories (Lane 2016, p. 198). Since labile groups relate to landscapes in a different way compared with sedentary farmers, archaeologists should use a different analytical approach when processing landscape data.

Paul Lane describes rock carvings, stone rows, and other prehistoric stone monuments in East Africa as nodes in a landscape in which many different meaningful places are linked by paths. Some of the stone rows mark graves and other types of places that were used over very long periods, whereas others were erected in connection with specific events that were fixed in people's memories through the use of the sites. Some stone monuments may have been established to mark routes. Lane sees these as 'places of memory' written in the landscape to mark people's presence in the past, present, and future. The places became nodal expressions of paths (or movements) in the landscape.

Labile groups often lack a strong sense of identity associated with places. Instead, their identity is linked to mythological and historical movements in landscapes, and both the history of individuals and groups are written in the landscape through paths. Places have meaning through the paths that link them together. The paths are the expression of a continual process of reconstruction of actual and potential networks of social and economic relations (Lane 2016). A pastoral nomad 'does not move to a dwelling but dwells by moving' (Casey 1993, cited in Lane 2016). Since movement always will be an option and a possibility in a labile society, this will probably be the same in a situation with a high degree of unbounded sedentism.

If a settlement was labile (i.e. not anchored to a fixed point in the geographical area), there is no reason to believe that it was referred to by a place name. More likely, it was probably referred to by the name of the social group. Places rooted in the topography by a name would be places where things happened, happen, or will happen and therefore not related to property but to events and practices. I have called these places *praxiotopes* (practice-place).

They are defined as places identified by the relation between the inscriptions (both natural and human-made) in the landscape and the practices performed there. A praxiotope is a place where certain things were done. A praxiotope might be a burial ground, rock carvings, hill forts, boathouses, caves, pastures, places for iron extraction, and so on.

In addition to emphasising the term ‘path’ as Lane does, I want to emphasise the significance of places in terms of praxiotopes. The landscape became meaningful in terms of places and what was done there, and the movement between those places.

This means that there is a fundamental difference between society in the Early and the Late Iron Age. The society in the Early Iron Age emphasised movements in the landscape and various practices in specific places. The Late Iron Age society practised property rights to the land, and most practices were carried out within the farm as a practice complex (Fig. 6). This created a cell-structured landscape that defined people in relation to the land as property.

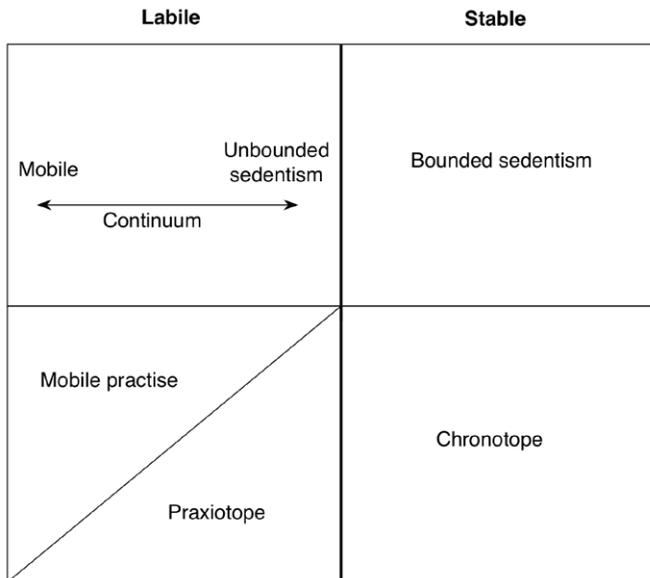


Figure 6. The figure shows how the landscape is perceived differently in stable and labile systems, respectively. Illustration: Geir Grønnesby NTNU University Museum.

Territorialisation – the transformation to an occupied landscape in the Late Iron Age

If names in the Early Iron Age landscape were the names of significant places linked to human activity and settlements did not have names, then the later farm names must have undergone what Anders Andrén (1987) has described as a process of territorialisation. The territorial divisions in the Middle Ages, such as *sysel* (to be active with something), *herred* (army-ride), *sogn* (to search), originally denoted an organisation that had social significance, but not territorial significance. Andrén believes that the territorialisation of the terms has taken place successively and at slightly different times in the Scandinavian countries. All of these terms point to social activities and thus to social organisation. Andrén (1987) subdivides the terms

into three categories: (1) terms that express a social affiliation without spatial belonging, of which the organisation of the *ting* (parliament) in Iceland is one such an example, as each farmer had to associate himself with a *gothi* (a social and political position), regardless of their location; (2) terms that express a social affiliation with spatial anchorage; and (3) terms that express a spatial entity. These three principles can be seen as phases in a development whereby a society shifts from being based on social, organisational principles to being organised on the basis of defined territorial units.

The transition from a landscape that is not owned to an owned landscape represents a revolution in terms of how the relationship between people and the landscape was structured (see also Albris, this volume). In the earliest phase of territorialisation, a network of strong allies must have been created to 'translate' the landscape into an owned landscape. An important actant in such a network must have been significant places and their names. Due to the fact that they were 'black boxes', place names were enrolled in the new networks as powerful allies in the process of translation of the owned landscape from an idea to an indisputable fact. In the same process, the place names themselves were translated into farm names because of their hybrid character (i.e. the close relationship between the farm name and the physical landscape they represented). An essential part of this translation was the farm boundaries as strong inscriptions in the landscape and their ability to influence human behaviour.

If my argumentation is correct, there is reason to believe that other concepts for territorial units went through the same process. An example is the county organisation (*fylke*). The counties in Western and Central Norway are known from Aslak Bolts cadastre from c.1430, Magnus the Law-menders testament from 1277, and the earliest laws (Frostatings law from 1260) when they were territorial units. The term *fylke* is also known from the saga literature (Skevik 1997, p. 185). The earliest use of the word is in a skaldic poem in Olav Tryggvason's saga. Many researchers are of the opinion that the county division has older origins, possibly as far back as the Early Iron Age (Hagland and Sandnes 1994, Skevik 1997). The hill forts and the extensive iron production in Trøndelag in the Early Iron Age have been used as an argument for dating the counties (Stenvik 2005, p. 144) to the Early Iron Age. The Norwegian word for county *fylke* can be linked to *folk* (people) *flokk* (crowd, group of people, flock), and *følge* (to follow), and it was also connected to the organisation of Viking Age armies - *fylking* (Falk and Torp 1991, Skevik 1997, p. 188). The meaning of the term may originally have been to gather people (maybe warriors) for different occasions (for example, the acts of war) and, thus, had a social, not territorial, definition. It can be assumed that the term *fylke* went through the same process of territorialisation, from being a social, organisational principle to a territorial one. This would fit well with the fact that Germanic warfare is usually described as a social entity, wherein the relationship between the warriors and their leader was most important (Rives 1999, Grønnesby and Ellingsen 2012).

I will now show some examples of farm names that I believe have gone through the same process of territorialisation. All the examples come from Steinkjer Municipality in Trøndelag (Fig. 7).

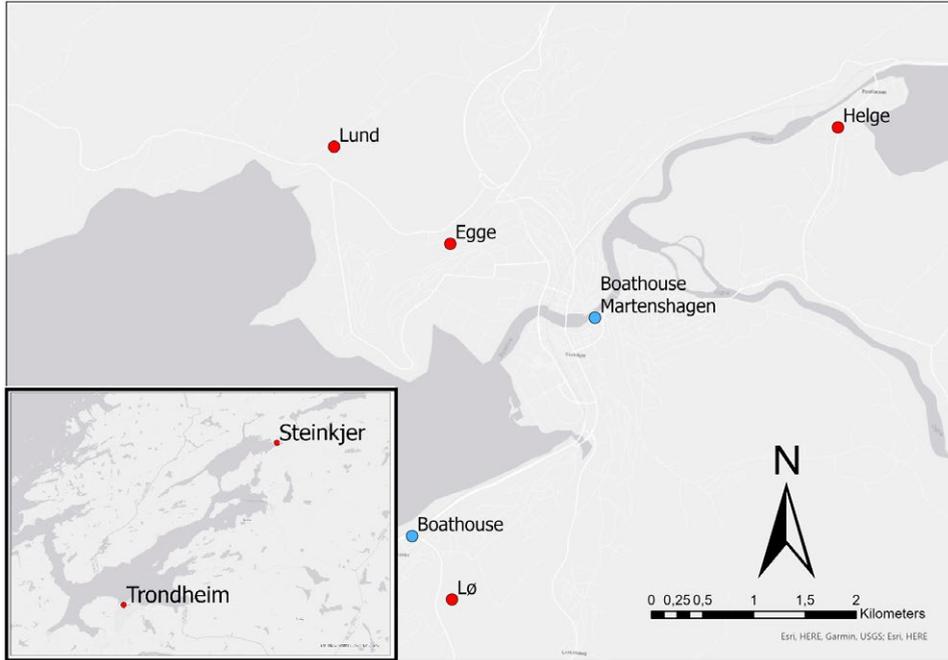


Figure 7. Steinkjer in Trøndelag. Map showing places mentioned in the text. © Kartverket.

Lø

In 2002 and 2003, the remains of a boathouse dating from the Early Iron Age, together with a burial mound with a secondary Viking boat grave in the upper part, was excavated at the farm named Lø in Steinkjer Municipality. The mound contained a further burial mound with an urned cremation burial dating from the Migration Period, along with four graves from the Roman period (Ellingsen and Grønnesby 2012). The boathouse was originally 34 m in length and dated from the 5th century AD (Grønnesby and Ellingsen 2012, Ellingsen 2012). The burial mound lay close to the boathouse. The name *Lø* can be traced back to the same origins as the name *Lade* in the sense of ‘a load, built-up quantity, or stack’, meaning ‘a place where one placed a load, a stacking space, storage space, or possibly a reloading place’ (my translation) (Stemshaug 2010). The name *Lade* is usually connected to trading posts or places for the exchange of goods. The name *Lø* can thus be traced back to the Early Iron Age (Stemshaug 2010, p. 103). It is not unreasonable to see the name as an expression of an activity that took place by the sea and boathouse in the Early Iron Age. This activity’s significance can be seen in the burial mound that was constructed adjacent to the boathouse (Ellingsen 2012). The name *Lø* thus has its origin as a description of an activity by the sea. By the time we meet the name *Lø* in the written sources of the Middle Ages, it had become the name of a defined territory. Thus, the name shifted from being the name or description of a significant activity associated with the boathouse to being a name of a territorial unit defined by its boundaries – the place name had become the name of a farm. The Viking Age boat grave at the top of the mound can be seen as both a way to make connections to the past and to cover up the past.

Egge

Another example of this is the farm name *Egge* (literally sharp edge or ridge). Egge is a farm known from Norse literature as a chieftain's residence in the Viking Age. The farmyard is located on top of a moraine ridge. In addition, there are several burial grounds known from the farm. One of them is dated to the Roman period. A test excavation on the farmyard has shown that the farmyard was probably established in the late 6th century. Settlement features from the Early Iron Age are located on several places around the ridge (Grønnesby 2013, 2015). The actual landscape formation, or the topographic inscription 'egg', influenced people to engage in certain actions, including the establishment of the burial fields. The burials themselves were inscriptions that linked practice and space as a praxiotope. The inscription 'graves' can be seen as a stronger inscription than the topographical feature because it confines the possible practices at the site. Again, when we meet the name in the written sources it is no longer a topographical feature but instead the name of a defined territorial unit.

Lund

Another example is the name *Lund*, which denotes a natural formation (a grove). Tacitus described sacred groves among Germanic tribes on the continent (Rives 1999, p. 164), and medieval chronicler Adam of Bremen described a sacred grove in Uppsala (Adam av Bremen 1993, p. 207). Within place name research, it is accepted that sacred groves existed in Scandinavia, and this is partly due to the fact that the first element in the name is frequently the name of a god; for example, *Torslund* (Vasshus 2011). Similarly, other farm names that describe prominent topographical features, such as *Ås*, *Berg*, and *Dal*, may have gained significance through specific practices because they were spiritual places by virtue of their topographical features. The name *Hov/Hof* is usually interpreted as a religious building, but its etymological meaning is 'height or 'hill' (Sundqvist 2009, p. 68). It might have been the

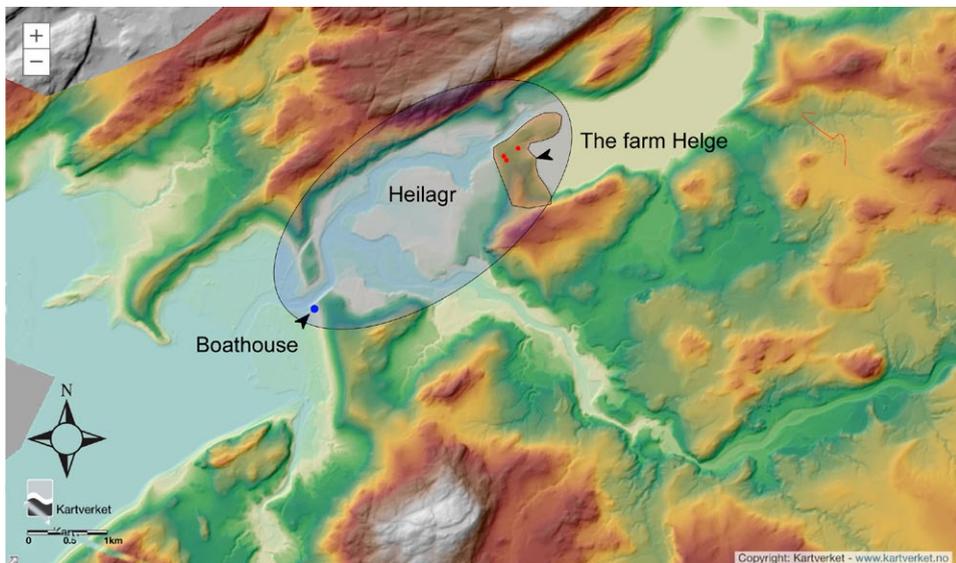


Figure 8. Steinkjer in Trøndelag. What the landscape looked like with 10-12 m higher water level. © Kartverket.

topographic feature ‘height’ as an inscription that gave the place its meaning and directed people to certain practices. Per Vikstrand concludes in his discussion that the name *Hov* is ‘a constituent property of certain gathering places which only in certain cases have become the basis for the name’ (author’s translation) (Vikstrand 1992, p. 133). Such marked topographical features are inscriptions because they led to certain actions. The places became important, and therefore their names became important through the relationship between the topographical features (inscriptions) and human actions. Thus, nature-related names have survived due to their significance as places for certain practices and later as territorial names.

Helge

The last example is the name *Helge* (Fig. 8). The name consists of two parts, *helg* and *eid*, and means the holy isthmus (strip of land) (Rygh 1898). The farm is thus named after a topographical feature that was perceived as sacred. Together with two menhirs and one stone circle, there are many grave mounds on the farm. Three of these mounds are between 40–50 meters in diameter. The dates of the three huge mounds are not known, but we have reason to believe that they can be dated to the Merovingian period (AD 550–800).

In the summer of 2020, the University Museum in Trondheim excavated a boathouse in south-west of Steinkjer. The house was very large, at least 35 x 14.5 m and situated at the mouth of the Steinkjer river. Having a sea level some 10–15 m higher than today, the area between the boathouse and Helge would have been a wetland with a fluctuating water level and a gateway to a large hinterland. This situation gives the area certain liminal qualities as a border zone between the fjord and the hinterland. I would suggest that it was precisely these qualities of the area that were perceived as sacred. The boathouse at Steinkjer and the mounds on Helge are dated to the Roman period/Migration period and probably the Merovingian Age. It may be that when the farm was established, the name was translated into a name for the territorially defined farm. The site’s sacred qualities were linked to the farm in the same way that the large mounds were inscriptions that helped to define the farm.

Settlements without names, names without settlements – and the transformation to an occupied landscape

These cases exemplify how ‘non-moderns’, meaning those who did not distinguish between nature and culture in the same way as the moderns, perceived the landscape as animated. Prominent features in the landscape such as peaks and valleys will appear as hybrids precisely because of their physical properties – the topographical features or inscriptions that make them actants in a network.

It may therefore have been the case that the names translated into farm names during the transition to the Late Iron Age were initially names of significant places, not of settlements. Settlements were referred to through the use of appellatives such as *hjem* (home) and *å bo* (to live). This corresponds to labile settlements that were not anchored in a fixed point in the landscape. The names that originated in the Early Iron Age and that later became farm names may have been place names, but they were not farm names. The fact that these place names were translated into farm names must therefore have been because they were important places through the practices performed at the site.

The place names of the Early Iron Age also served as chronotopes in the sense that they linked space and time. In this context, space was not the territory but rather the points, such as the nodes in a network of places. The significance of these places emerged through a relationship between the place, with its topographical features (inscriptions), and the actions (both in the past, present, and future) carried out at the place as praxiotopes. Hence, the name *Lund* was as much linked to the actions at the place as to the topographical term *lund*.

In the Late Iron Age, these places were enlisted as chronotopes in a new network as an ally to legitimise new inscriptions in the landscape, namely the boundaries. The boundaries, as inscriptions, entailed new and different actions linked to the places like *Lø*, *EGGE*, *Lund* and *Helge*. These sites were transformed from praxiotopes, identified through inscriptions and practices, to chronotopes identified by the inscriptions borders and odel-mounds.

Similarly, as the burial mound at *Lø* both covered and preserved the past, the farm names did the same at *EGGE*, *Lund* and *Helge*: they preserved the past while simultaneously contributing to changing human practices in the landscape.

The question is when the names shifted from being related to inscriptions and practices to becoming territorially defined entities. Andrén considers that this was a gradual process (Andrén 1987). The beginning of the process may have started during the transition from the Early Iron Age to the Late Iron Age and was linked to the establishment of land ownership rights as a fundamental structuring legal principle. The establishment of boundaries in the landscape served as new man-made inscriptions in the landscape, which in turn influenced human behaviour. With the transition to the Late Iron Age, the landscape became defined in a new network with a different purpose. The place names still existed because they helped enlist other actants into the network and establish and stabilise the farm as a fact or black box.

The transition between the Early and Late Iron Ages (or between the Migration Period and the Merovingian period) is usually regarded as corresponding to AD 550-600. This is reflected in major changes in the archaeological material. The use of big boathouses, hill forts, caves and rock shelters, and the extensive iron production ceased. The burial practices, types of objects, and weapon sets all changed (Solberg 2000). These changes took place against the background of major political, economic, and social changes on the continent (Grønnesby 2019). The reasons for the changes are not discussed here, but they are usually linked to the fact that the leaders in societies had reorganised the landscape into fewer and larger units (Myhre 2002, p. 164). The changes can also be seen in the context of influences from the continent and/or the Justinian Plague (Solberg 2000, p. 200 ff.) and climate changes due to a volcanic eruption (Gräslund and Price 2012). Regardless of the underlying causes, a situation was created in which new actants had the power to destabilise the old networks and establish new ones. Through this destabilisation, the old places and/or place names acquired a new 'agency' that caused them to be redefined from being meaningful places to defined territories. In both cases, they were chronotopes, but they combined time and space through different inscriptions in the landscape.

It is possible that Norse mythology, with its in-farm/out-farm dichotomy (Thorvaldsen 2013, p. 478), contributed to this process and was part of the enlisting of the 'farms' as actants in the new network. In the transition of names from place names to farm names, the importance of combining time and space became much more important for the farm names because the

boundaries were decisive for the constitution of the ‘farm’. Thus, it can be said that the farm names’ chronotopic significance was far stronger than the Early Iron Age place names.

Concluding remarks

The idea that the farm names can be traced back to the Early Iron Age seems outdated. Archaeological research on farmyards has revealed an accumulation of cultural layers that started in the Late Iron Age. This implies that the names of the historical farms cannot be traced back to the Early Iron Age as farm names. A more labile settlement that was not anchored in a point in the landscape did not have a place name but was probably referred to through the use of appellatives such as ‘home’, ‘living’, and ‘the place where we are’. The later farm names, which on a linguistic basis can be traced back to the Early Iron Age, must therefore have been place names. Thus, farm names came into existence through a change in the interaction between people and landscapes.

In conclusion, present-day farm names cannot be seen as a source for settlement history for the period before AD 600. In order to understand today’s farm names and their history, they must be seen as expressions of the relationships between the people and the landscapes in which they were active.

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Placing Place Names in Norwegian Archaeology

This collection of papers serves to illustrate how place names have a continued relevance to archaeology both in Norway and beyond.

The interdisciplinary use of place name studies and archeology have long traditions in Norway and Scandinavia. However, the prerequisites for this type of research have changed in recent decades with decreased resources in onomastic departments while archaeology develops rapidly through new methods in surveying, natural sciences, metal detection and excavations. Where do we stand today and how can we improve and renew our views on toponymy and of the methodological challenges we face when combining linguistic and material remains?

The various papers in the book emphasise how place names can provide unique insights into past people's perceptions of land and sense of place, providing access to emic categories otherwise unavailable to archaeologists. Names work as active elements in ongoing discourses about the landscape, and there can be intimate connections between places, names, populations and identities. Toponymy may reflect or evoke emotions on both individual and collective levels.

Through a range of perspectives, this collection of papers explores the status and perspectives of interdisciplinary research in a Norwegian context, focusing on the methodologies of interdisciplinary studies, research environments and prehistoric as well as historical periods.



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