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Expanding Horizons

Settlement Patterns and Outfield Land Use in the
Norse North Atlantic

Dawn Elise Mooney, Lísabet Guðmundsdóttir, Barbro Dahl,
Howell Roberts and Morten Ramstad (eds.)



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The wood artefacts on the left side are from Borgund, Norway while the artefacts on the right side are from Norse Greenlandic sites.

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Preface

This volume stems from the Expanding Horizons project, which began in 2018. The project was funded by a Workshop Grant from the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS), held by Orri Vésteinsson, Ramona Harrison, and Christian Koch Madsen. Funding was awarded for two workshops, as well as a subsequent publication of the material presented. Workshop organisation and grant administration were carried out by Morten Ramstad, Lísabet Guðmundsdóttir, Howell Roberts, Barbro Dahl, Birna Lárusdóttir, and Dawn Elise Mooney. The workshops gave researchers and practitioners from across the North Atlantic region an opportunity to forge new connections with each other, not only through academic presentations but also through shared experiences of archaeological sites, standing Medieval structures and their surrounding landscapes.

The first Expanding Horizons meeting took place in Norway, on June 1st–4th 2018. The program began in Bergen with a tour of the city's Medieval sites, led by Prof. Gitte Hansen, before travelling to Mo in Modalen for two days of presentations and discussions. The workshop was attended by 36 participants, 27 of whom gave presentations on topics including archaeological survey in mountain regions, driftwood, seaweed, stone, birds and feathers, and fishing and marine mammals. The two-day seminar was followed by an excursion visiting sites including the stave churches at Borgund, Hopperstad and Kaupanger, the Viking trading sites at Kaupanger and Lærdal, and Norway's oldest secular wooden building, Finnesloftet in Voss, built around AD 1300. In between archaeological sites, the excursion also took in the dramatic fjord landscape of western Norway. Here and in Iceland, both the upstanding structures and their surrounding landscape should be seen as key actors in the development of the settlement and subsistence practices discussed in this volume.

Just under a year later, on April 25th–28th 2019, the Expanding Horizons group met again in Iceland. Forty-one participants gathered in Brjónsstaðir for two more days of talks and discussions. While the first workshop had a main focus on remote wild resources, the second focused on settlement and land-use patterns, agricultural practices, and trade and exchange. Again, the workshop concluded with an excursion to local archaeological sites. Attendees visited the episcopal manor farm and church at Skálholt, the reconstructed Viking Age house at Stöng in Þjórsárdalur, the caves at Ægissíðuhellir, the archaeological site at the manor farm Oddi and the preserved medieval turf-built farm and museum at Keldur. Photographs of the participants of both workshops are presented on the following pages.

Partly due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, more time than anticipated has passed between these meetings and the publication of this volume. We thank the authors for their patience, and for their outstanding contributions to the archaeology of western Norway and the Norse North Atlantic diaspora. We are also very grateful to our colleagues who assisted the editors in the peer review of this volume. Lastly, we thank you, the reader, and we hope that you find inspiration in the papers presented here.

Stavanger/Reykjavík/Bergen, Spring 2022

Dawn Elise Mooney, Lísabet Guðmundsdóttir, Barbro Dahl, Howell Roberts and Morten Ramstad



Attendees of the first Expanding Horizons workshop at Mo in Modalen, June 2018.

Back row, left to right: Jennica Einebrant Svensson, Garðar Guðmundsson, Even Bjørdal, Orri Vésteinsson, Morten Ramstad, Jørgen Rosvold, James Barrett, Gísli Pálsson, Michael Nielsen, Christian Koch Madsen, Konrad Smiarowski, Howell Magnus Roberts, Ragnar Orten Lie; Middle row, left to right: Solveig Roti Dahl, Brita Hope, Ragnheiður Gló Gylfadóttir, Kristoffer Dahle, Douglas Bolender, Hákan Petersson; Front row, left to right: Mjöll Snæsadóttir, Birna Lárusdóttir, Lilja Laufey Davíðsdóttir, Irene Baug, Kristin Ilves, Jørn Henriksen, Kathryn Catlin, Lilja Björk Pálsdóttir, Gitte Hansen, Kristborg Þórsdóttir, Élie Pinta, Dawn Elise Mooney, Lisabet Guðmundsdóttir, Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, Ramona Harrison. *Photo: Kathryn Catlin.*



Attendees of the second Expanding Horizons workshop at Brjánsstaðir, April 2019.

Back row, left to right: Howell Magnus Roberts, Morten Ramstad, Kjetil Loftsgarden, Kristoffer Dahle, Douglas Bolender, Ragnheiður Gló Gylfadóttir, Hildur Gestsdóttir, Michael Nielsen, Orri Vésteinsson, Jennica Einebrant Svensson, Trond Meling, Knut Paasche, Anja Roth Niemi, Knut Andreas Bergsvik, Simun Arge; Middle row, left to right: Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir, Brita Hope, Hákan Petersson, Kathryn Catlin, Even Bjørdal, Ragnheiður Traustadóttir, Élie Pinta, Solveig Roti Dahl, Per Christian Underhaug; Front row, left to right: Kristborg Þórsdóttir, Sólveig Guðmundsdóttir Beck, Guðmundur Ólafsson, Gitte Hansen, Mjöll Snæsadóttir, Lisbeth Prösch-Danielsen, Kari Loe Hjelle, Irene Baug, Christian Koch Madsen, Ramona Harrison, Barbro Dahl, Dawn Elise Mooney, Thomas Birch, Lisabet Guðmundsdóttir, Jørn Henriksen. *Photo: Lisabet Guðmundsdóttir.*



Barbro Dahl

Settlement, resources and routes in Iron Age Forsand

Forsandmoen is a prehistoric settlement site continuously in use from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age. This paper uses the large settlement as a case study to explore the duality of the agrarian and the outfield resources as two entangled aspects of the Iron Age society. The outfield resources offer a reminder of the need for expanding perspectives, in the same manner as routes and exchange direct our attention towards regional and inter-regional contexts. The abandonment of the large settlement at Forsandmoen in the Late Iron Age is the central research question. This paper argues that Forsand played a role as an intermediary between the outer coast of Rogaland and the mountain areas of South-Norway. It is suggested that the lines of communication broke down or were reorganised in a way that made an intermediary excess in the eighth century. At the other end of the routes from Forsand, finds in Setesdal are concentrated in the areas where these routes come down from the mountains. Grave finds start to appear in Setesdal at the same time as the abandonment of all known settlement sites in Forsand. It is proposed that the divergent, but coinciding regional patterns can be related. The divergent patterns are seen as a strong argument against an intensified exploitation of resources governed by leaders seated along the coast.

Introduction

With 275 buildings covering the time span from 1500 BC to AD 700, Forsandmoen is the largest prehistoric settlement site in Norway. The location, providing easy access to mountain resources at the mouth of intersecting fjords, enabled a role as an intermediary in the communication lines between the coast and the mountain areas of South-Norway. In this paper, I wish to explore the possible reasons for its abandonment at the brink of the Viking Period, at a time when we should expect increased exchange.

This paper aims to expand our perspectives in five different ways. The first challenge concerns the separation of the outfield and the agrarian perspectives into two parcelled areas of research. Due to its character and size, Forsandmoen has been compared to the villages in Denmark and South-Sweden and interpreted in an agrarian context. However, most of Norway can be characterized as outfield, and the use of outfield resources was an integrated part of farming (Martens 1992, Kallhovd and Larsen 2006, Mjærum and Larsen 2014, Loftsgarden 2017, Stene and Wangen 2017). The farms are not limited to farming, and the settlement depends upon all the resources available for exploitation (Martens 1992, Stene and Wangen 2017). This approach should not be restricted to studies of the diverse use of large outfield areas in the Viking Period and Middle Ages, but brought into all settlement studies.

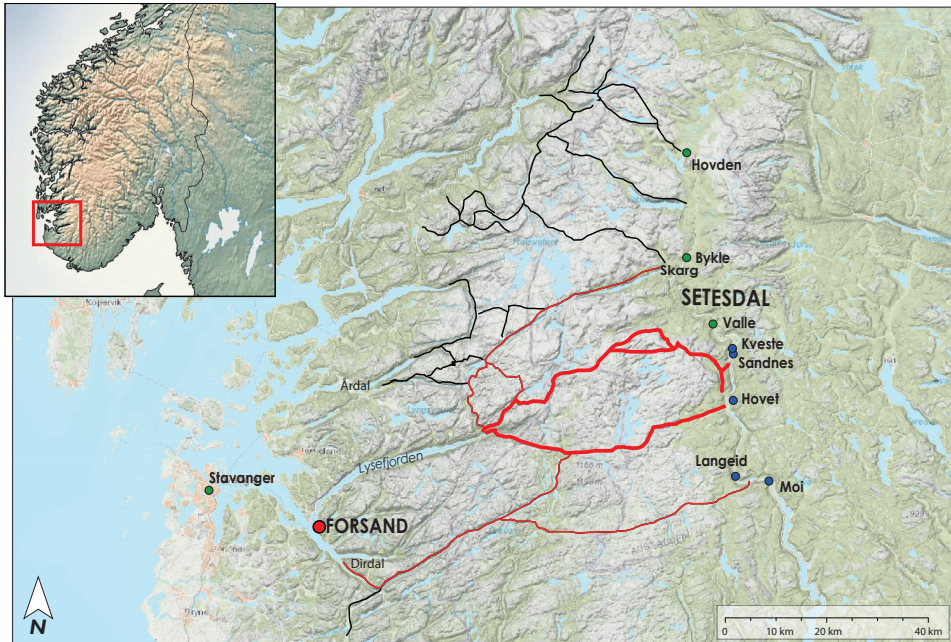


Figure 1. Map showing sites and places mentioned in the text. Old routes are marked by lines. The thick red line is the Hide Road. Lines in red could have been controlled from Forsand. Ill: Theo Gil Bell/Barbro Dahl, AM, UIS.

Including the outfield in the sphere of the farm can represent an alternative path beyond the dichotomies agrarian-outfield and centre/core-periphery. A second aim of this paper is to challenge the organisation of sites into systems of centres and margins. Applying Forsandmoen as a case study in order to explore the outfield could easily fall into the biased perception that comes from taking the farm and the agricultural economy as a granted point of departure in explaining the use of the outfield resources, its organisation and contexts (see Holm *et al.* 2009, Stene and Wangen 2017). The dense settlements along the south-western coast are not interpreted as centres that had managed to take control over a vast but homogenous inland. As I will show, communication with the inland area could play a central role in the understanding of large settlements where the mountain routes meet the fjords.

Routes and resources underline the need to apply an inter-regional delimitation, which is the third aim of this paper. Resource exploitation must be viewed in connection with both local settlements and larger societal contexts (Stene and Wangen 2017, p. 160-161). Forsandmoen, and other known sites in Forsand municipality, represent the local context. The perspective will be expanded into a regional context that includes other settlements at the end of the fjords, and into an inter-regional context with Sirdal and Setesdal at the other end of the mountain trails. A fourth aim is to combine different categories of archaeological sources, from both excavations and surveys, in several counties and museum districts. The wide range of sources touches upon the fifth aim of applying a wide chronological frame by investigating both the Early and the Late Iron Age. The attempt to combine a wide range of sources within a larger geographical and chronological perspective may provide new insights into differences and resemblances, as well as long-term transformations and rapid changes. At the same time as the long-term perspective holds a strong position in archaeology, a sensitivity towards deviating

developments and disruptions can offer alternatives to a grand narrative of linear and steady growth culminating in the Viking Period. *Skinnevegen*, the old route between Forsand and Setesdal (Figure 1), will be used as a material link between two areas that seem to go through contradictory developments during the Iron Age. The eighth century stands out as the age of both large and interregional transformations. The coincidence in time can suggest related developments that need to be addressed using an inter-regional perspective.

Field methods and challenges

The wide perspective attempted here is challenged by the way the scope of pre-development surveys and excavations influences new knowledge. Areas surrounding the larger cities at the outer coast have a much higher development pressure, and have been surveyed more intensively. Moreover, most of the surveys and excavations in Rogaland are conducted on farmed land. Important exceptions are surveys due to the establishment of new power lines and reservoirs in the mountains (see Svensson and Dahl, this volume). East of Rogaland, mountain areas have been the subjects of surveys by the counties of Vest-Agder and Aust-Agder, and excavations by the University of Oslo. The development of tourism has uncovered large iron production sites in the low alpine area of Bykle, in the north of Setesdal (Kallhovd and Larsen 2006, Johansson 2012, Russ 2012, Kile-Vesik 2014, Mjærum and Larsen 2014), whereas excavations along the main road through Setesdal have revealed new settlements and graves on low sandy terraces along the river Otra (Reitan 2009, 2011, Loftsgarden and Wenn 2012, Reitan 2014, Wenn *et al.* 2015, Glørstad and Wenn 2017, Wenn and Arnarsson 2019). Bearing in mind the enormous and heterogenous areas, the number of surveys and excavations in the centre of South-Norway is low, with a deficiency of recent syntheses (see Stene and Wangen 2017).

Early Iron Age	Pre-Roman Iron Age (PRIA)	500 BC-1
	Early Roman Iron Age (ERIA)	1-150
	Late Roman Iron Age (LRIA)	150-400
	Migration Period (MP)	400-550
Late Iron Age	Merovingian Period (MEP)	550-ca.800
	Viking Period (VP)	ca. 800-1050

Table 1. Iron Age periods and abbreviations mentioned in the text.

Research history of Forsandmoen

The research project at Forsandmoen started in 1980. The investigation led to the discovery of a large site which has come to play a unique role in the study of settlement development in Norway (Myhre 2002, p. 78, 132). The project was the first large-scale investigation of a settlement beneath cultivated fields in Norway (Løken *et al.* 1996, Løken 1997, Dahl 2009). Through the adaptation and development of new survey and excavation methods, 275 houses were documented and partly to completely excavated (Figure 2). The three-aisled buildings cover the entire time span from 1500 BC to AD 700. In addition, two excavations in 2007 and 2017 investigated the southern part of the settlement site (Dahl 2008, 2009, 2019, 2021) (Figure 3 and 4). During the Late Roman Iron Age (AD 150-400) and Migration Period (AD 400-550) the settlement reached a maximum of 20 farms organised in east-west oriented rows. Each farm consisted of a main building, which housed people and animals, as well as a secondary longhouse defined as a workshop. In the Merovingian Period (AD 550-c. 800), the settlement shrank down to two small settlement areas that were abandoned around AD 700.

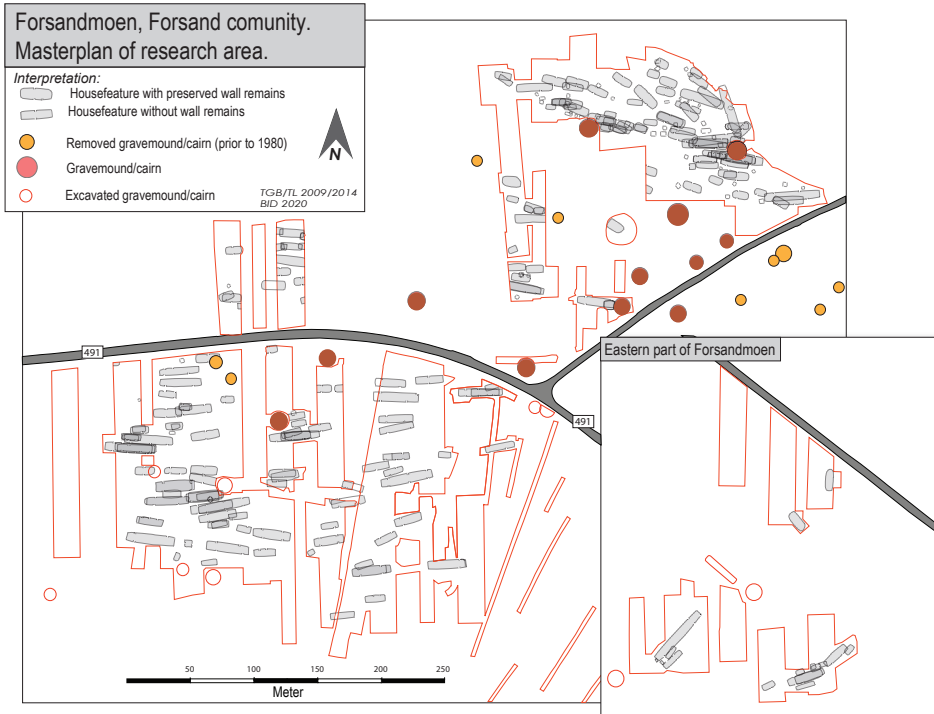


Figure 2. Overview of the settlement area at Forsandmoen. III: Theo Gil Bell/Barbro Dahl, AM, UiS.



Figure 3. Overview of the settlement area at Forsandmoen during the excavation in 2007. Photo: Barbro Dahl, AM, UiS.



Figure 4. Overview of the settlement area at Forsandmoen at the beginning of the excavation in 2017. Mound 1 in the southwestern part of the settlement has been uncovered. Photo: Theo Gil Bell, AM, UiS.

A prominent question regarding Forsandmoen has been the possible reasons for the abandonment of such a massive and long-lasting settlement. The end of the settlement has been seen as a process similar to the abandonment of numerous farms in South-West-Norway in the transition between the Early and Late Iron Age (Løken 1988, 2001, Myhre 2002, Dahl 2009, 2016b). New radiocarbon dates confirm that Forsandmoen was still in use in the Merovingian Period, although as a much smaller settlement than in the Migration Period (Dahl 2019). Instead of merely interpreting the abandonment as part of a general shift in the settlement pattern of the region, which seemed to have occurred before the final termination of Forsandmoen, we can try to expand the perspective by exploring the regional and interregional context of Forsand.

The abandonment of Forsandmoen could be closely linked to the location of the settlement. The key to understanding the massive settlement might not be its location at a large moraine terrace suitable for farming alone. Rather, it is crucial to examine the access to mountain resources and the possibility to play the role as an intermediary in the communication lines between the outer coast and large mountain areas. Lysefjorden in Forsand, as well as Frafjord a bit further south, represent accesses to large mountain areas with connections by mountain trails to Sirdal and Setesdal (Figure 1).

Local context

Forsandneset is a headland by the intersection of Høgsfjorden, Lysefjorden and Frafjord, 1.4 km west of Forsandmoen (Figure 5 and 6). Extensive settlement traces have been detected in all surveyed areas at Forsandneset (Hemdorff 1991, Gjerpe 1998, Syvertsen 2003, Viste 2010, Frækhaug 2015, Dahl and Mooney 2020). Diagnostic ceramics and the few current radiocarbon dates indicate a widespread settlement in the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period (Figure 5). Excavations have resulted in a far more differentiated image of the settlement with overlapping longhouses from the end of the Late Neolithic to the Merovingian Period. While the youngest buildings found by the church are from the LRIA (Dahl and Mooney 2020) and the MP (Hemdorff 1991), the houses excavated in Bergevik show continuity from the Early Iron Age to the Late Iron Age (Dahl *et al.* 2017). Two buildings are dated to the Merovingian Period, but there are no houses from the Viking Period at the site overlooking the transection of the fjords. Further, a comparison between the two buildings from the Merovingian Period and the 67-meter-long house from the Late Roman Iron Age indicate that the settlement at Bergevik also contracted at the transition between the Early and the Late Iron Age (Figure 7).

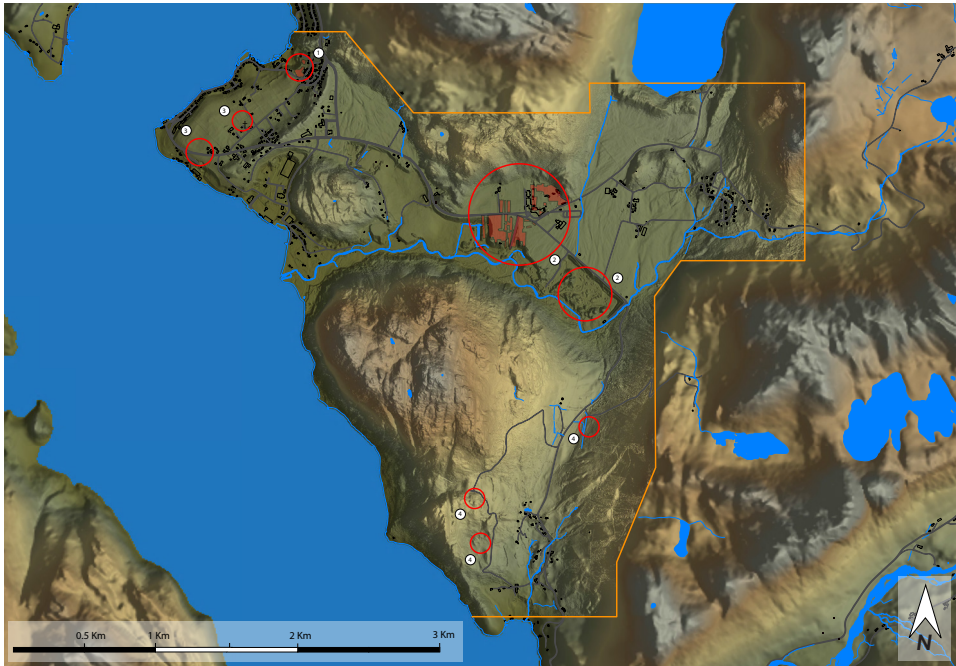


Figure 5. Overview of Forsandmoen and Forsandneset. 1. The settlement area at Bergevik. 2. The settlement area at Forsandmoen. 3. Other known settlement areas at Forsandneset. 4. Preserved farm complexes in grazing areas. III: Theo Gil Bell, AM, UiS.



Figure 6. The location of the site Bergevik on a terrace at Forsandneset (to the right). Lysefjorden in front. Photo: Jon R. Husvegg, AM, UiS.

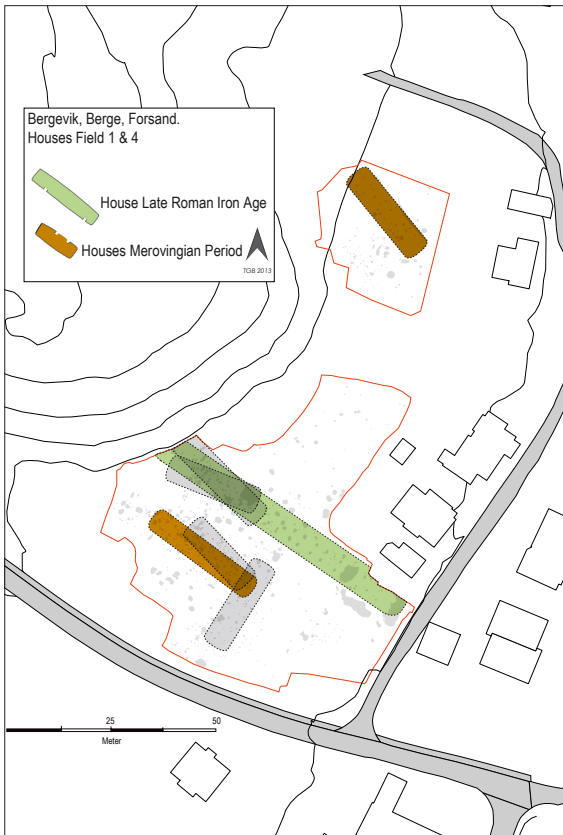


Figure 7. Selected houses at Bergevik. House 1 from the Late Roman Iron Age, House 2 and 9 from the Merovingian Period. Ill: Theo Gil Bell, AM, UiS.



Figure 8. The settlement area by the church. The entrance of Lysefjorden in the background with the settlement site at Bergvik in the area under development to the right. Photo: Theo Gil Bell, AM, UIS.

Preserved farm complexes further east show that these more regular settlements coexisted alongside the densely settled areas at Forsandmoen and Forsandneset in the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period (Figure 5). A sample from the central fireplace in the almost 50-meter-long house in Heia, the farm complex closest to Forsandmoen, has been radiocarbon dated to the Migration Period (Løken 2006, p. 318), and three samples from a longhouse in the farm complex in Oaland have been dated to the Migration Period (Bjørdal 2019). The local society in Forsand must have gone through large transformations from AD 200 to 700, from an extensive and dense settlement in the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period, through a considerable contraction at the transition to the Merovingian Period, to what appears to be an abandonment during the Merovingian Period. The settlement development may indicate that the area of Forsand lost its position as a link between the outer coast and the mountain areas at the threshold of the Viking Period, precisely at a time with an expected increase in the exchange.

Transitions

The case of Forsand represents a reminder against a linear approach where the entire Iron Age is viewed as a steady and gradual growth culminating in a peak in the Viking Period. There is reason to believe that the upheavals in Europe towards the end of the Early Iron Age created a break in the lines of exchange for the outer coast of Rogaland, interpreted as the primary access point to North Sea trade and further redistribution along the Norwegian coast (Slomann 1956, Magnus and Myhre 1976, Farbrege 1980). Bjørn Myhre has later moderated his interpretation of a general decline at the beginning of the Merovingian Period (Myhre

2002, 2003), and the transition between the Early and the Late Iron Age has lately been the object of much attention and many interesting debates (Gjerpe 2014, Gundersen 2019). Myhre pointed out that archaeological excavations on the outermost coast and in highland districts show that fishing, summer dairying and other forms of resource utilisation increased rather than declined in the seventh century (Myhre 2003, p. 85).

The apparently opposing intensification in the use of the outfield and decline in settlement at Forsand strongly indicate large regional differences. While long-lasting settlement sites were abandoned in Forsand municipality in the Merovingian Period, the regional settlement patterns indicate a transverse movement of many buildings at the same time (Dahl 2016b). The local and regional transformations must have had an impact on the organisation of inter-regional exchange with communities in the mountainous areas in South-Norway. The increased resource exploitation in mountainous areas might be related to the transformations in settlement at the other end of the mountain trails, as a common or divergent relocation of interest, resources or routes.

Routes and resources

Skinnevegen (The Hide Road) is the name of the mountain trail from Lysebotn, at the end of Lysefjorden, to Setesdal (Figure 1). The route is considered to go far back in time, but the name derives from the transport of leather and hides from Setesdal to Stavanger in the Middle Ages. Setesdal was part of West-Norway and paid taxes to the bishop in Stavanger (Rolfsen 1977, Mikkelsen 1980, Larsen 1981, Tjeltveit 1999). In addition to leather and hides, Setesdal paid their taxes in cattle, butter and cheese, while grain, salt, herring, clothes, horses and other merchandises were transported from Stavanger to the inland areas.

Iron was most probably also transported down from Setesdal (Løken 1982, p. 103, Mjærum and Larsen 2014, p. 109, Loftsgarden 2017, p. 125). Kjetil Loftsgarden points out the distinction between the many known iron production sites in the east of Norway, and the almost absence of such sites in the west; an exchange between the different regions would have required stable economic, social and political networks between the coast and the inland of South-Norway (Loftsgarden 2017, p. 14). Large-scale iron production sites from the Viking Period and Middle Ages have been discovered in Hovden in Bykle, but excavations in 2011 and 2012 dated some of the iron production back to the Roman Iron Age (Johansson 2012, Kile-Vesik 2014, Mjærum and Larsen 2014). However, the general picture shows iron production along the coast, in the valleys, forest and lower heaths of Agder in the Early Iron Age, where the known sites from this early phase provided a surplus production (Kallhovd and Larsen 2006, Mjærum and Larsen 2014). At this point we have to take into consideration that the iron production sites from the Early Iron Age can be underreported compared to the iron production sites from the end of the Late Iron Age and Middle Ages, which were large charcoal pits visible on the surface. Among the many surveyed iron production sites and finds of iron slag in Sirdal, a few, if not all of them, are assumed to be from the Early Iron Age (Stylegar 1999, Larsen 2009). Despite heavy development of tourism in the upper part of Sirdal, this valley has not been the object of excavations and new discoveries in the same manner as Hovden in the upper part of Setesdal. Regarding Sirdal, the discovery of the southernmost pitfall trap in the world at Degjevattnet (Bang-Andersen 2004, 2015) is an important reminder of the wide range of traces from resource exploitation we can come across on surveys in this low alpine area.

Regional context

Several of the routes could have been controlled by Forsand (Figure 1). Where the routes from the mountains meet the fjords, we find large concentrations of archaeological features, not only in Forsand, but also in Dirdal and Årdal in Hjelmeland. Most of the known sites in Dirdal appear to be from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. Hence, the dense settlement of Dirdal point towards the same peak as Forsand, and the two areas should be considered as interrelated in the last part of the Early Iron Age as they were in historical times when Dirdal was part of Forsand municipality. Forsand is situated at the entrance of the fjord leading into Dirdal, providing the opportunity to control the seaway. At the same time, we have to bear in mind that sites concentrated at the end of the fjords indicating a peak in the settlement in the LRIA/MP is a common pattern in the southwest. The location of the large concentrations of settlement traces indicate that the mountain resources and exchange were of great importance already in the LRIA and MP.

Located at the intersection of the fjords or at the place of transshipment from boats to mountain trails, the large settlements could facilitate and supervise the transport of commodities. With a settlement of 20 simultaneous farm units, it is reasonable to assume that the population of Forsandmoen took active part in the exchange. Trond Løken has suggested that a surplus of food production in Forsandmoen could have been exchanged for seal skins in Lysefjorden and reindeer skins in Lysebotn (Løken 1992). If we consider the barns in all the longhouses in Forsandmoen, the number of cattle must have been substantial. While cowhides and skins might have been exchanged with Europe, the remaining question is what kind of items Forsand could exchange with Sirdal and Setesdal, particularly to be able to get hold of iron in return. A product we can safely assume a demand for in the inland is salt. A larger number of people could indicate different forms of labour-intensive work, for instance taking care of the transport of commodities, by horses and boats, as well as participating in seasonal work adapted to the use of outfield resources such as hunting, trapping, fishing, harvesting and possibly iron production.

Inter-regional context

At the other end of the routes from Forsand, finds in Setesdal appear to be concentrated in the areas where these routes come down from the mountains (Figure 1). In contrast to Forsand and Dirdal, Setesdal has remarkable finds from the Viking Period. When house remains and two mounds were excavated at Skarg in Bykle in the 1970's, they represented the first finds from the Early Iron Age in Bykle municipality (Rolfsen 1977). In Valle municipality there are also few finds from the Early Iron Age, and no finds from graves are known until rich grave finds start to appear from the eighth century (Larsen 1981). The rich graves in Valle emerge at the same time as the abandonment of Forsandmoen. Five graves with scales and eleven coins from four different contexts have been interpreted as indicators of a trading place in Valle (Larsen 1981). Five of the 18 graves recently discovered at Langeid contained coins, weights, hacksilver and a set of scales (Loftsgarden and Wenn 2012, Wenn *et al.* 2015, Wenn 2016, Glørstad and Wenn 2017). The clear evidence of trade-related activities points towards a transshipment port at Langeid in the Viking Period (Glørstad and Wenn 2017). Both Langeid and Valle are situated at the ends of different routes within *Skinnevegen* (Holen 1968) (Figure 1). Whereas the trade-related finds from Langeid stem from one grave field, the rich grave finds from Valle come from 23 different farms; however, only five of the graves contained scales and coins (Larsen 1981, Glørstad and Wenn 2017).

At the same time as the grave finds from Setesdal appear to be concentrated within a short time span, it is important to point out the source critical challenges of interpreting an area solely on the known grave finds (Dahl 2022). While one challenge is related to the divergent ways of interpreting presence or absence of rich graves (Lillehammer 1996, Myhre 2001, 2003, Williams 2006, Löwenborg 2012, Dahl 2016a, 2016b), Kathrine Stene and Vivian Wangen point out how the scarceness of grave finds from the Early Iron Age was interpreted as a clear sign of sparse settlement and a late *landnám* in the valleys in East-Norway (Stene and Wangen 2017). While the term *landnám*, literally meaning taking land (Store Norske Leksikon), is often associated with the Norse settlement of Iceland in the Viking Period, the inner *landnám* refers to new and denser settlement in Norway during the Iron Age. Recent excavations and pollen samples indicate farming throughout the Early Iron Age with an intensification around AD 200, in line with the coastal areas of Rogaland (Myhre 2002, Dahl 2016b). An increased exploitation and a multifaceted utilisation with extraction of iron, hunting and trapping, quarrying of stone, and the use of summer pasture and shielings, took place in the mountainous areas in southern Norway from the beginning of the Iron Age (Myhre 2002). The intensification of livestock grazing is most prominent in West-Norway (Stene 2015, p. 198). Pollen samples from Forsandmoen indicate a change towards less farming and heavier grazing in the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period (Prøsch-Danielsen and Simonsen 1988).

Surveys and excavations along the main road through Setesdal (RV-9) offer new insights into settlements from the Late Bronze Age into the Middle Ages. While the earliest traces of settlement at Moi and Kveste have been dated to the Late Bronze Age (Reitan 2009, 2011, 2014, Wenn and Arnarsson 2019), the earliest use of a grave mound at Sandnes is represented by a cremation burial from the Late Bronze Age (Wenn and Arnarsson 2019). At Langeid, farming has been dated back to the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The level of activity increased in the Roman Iron Age, represented by cooking pits, traces of iron processing and farming (Wenn 2016). At Moi, parts of a 49.5 m long and 9-9.5 m broad house from the Late Roman Iron Age was discovered (Reitan 2009, 2011, 2014). The width of the house is remarkable and could be compared to the contemporaneous House II in Forsandmoen interpreted as a hall (Løken 2001, 2006, Dahl 2022). As in Langeid, pits for iron processing were dated to the Late Roman Iron Age, but at Moi the pits could be related to the contemporaneous large building (Reitan 2011). Apart from the large House II at Moi, the most frequent discovery along the RV-9 were houses from the Viking Period. Six houses from the Viking Period were discovered at Sandnes, while two or possibly three buildings from the period AD 900-1200 were found at Moi. In an overall perspective, the recently excavated settlement sites point towards the same peak in the Viking Period as indicated by the known grave finds from Valle. If we compare with the more recent development in Rogaland, where an increasing number of buildings from the Late Iron Age have been discovered (Bjørddal 2016), future excavations in Setesdal may detect both a growing number of houses from the Late Iron Age and long-term settlements from the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Recent surveys and excavations illustrate the great potential for new insights into settlement, farming and graves in Setesdal, in the same way as in other valleys in East-Norway (Stene and Wangen 2017). The most extraordinary discovery has been the grave field at Langeid. Two Viking Period graves found outside a mound at Hovet in Valle municipality in 2007 (Kjos 2015) bear resemblance to the graves at Langeid, as well as representing a general Viking

Period trend of burying the dead deep in the subsoil (Dahl 2016b). The graves were not discovered until the mechanical uncovering of the subsoil. Langeid, Hovet and Forsandmoen emphasise the challenge of interpreting areas solely based on visible features and known finds. At the same time, we have become more aware of this challenge because of the rapidly growing amount of material, due to recent developments and methodologies. If we manage to use the pre-development surveys and excavations as generators of archaeological research, the continual access to new, not only cumulatively more, material should ensure for archaeology the advantageous position of generating rapidly altering images of the past.

Conclusions and future attentions

We need to address how shifting methods and interpretations produce altered images of the past. The necessity of ongoing discussions of the way methodology shapes our knowledge of the past becomes even more intrusive in attempts to apply a broad, interregional perspective. Methodological changes may include the top soil stripping of cultivated fields, introduced in Norway by the Forsandmoen project. While surveys and excavations of cultivated fields have revealed sites that radically change our interpretation of past settlement, the use of mechanical excavators still has a largely unexplored potential in areas currently used as pasture. Surveys in pasture areas cannot be limited to evidence visible on the surface, lest we end up with two different sets of knowledge, where the modern use of the survey area defines the methodology and thus the archaeological record (Dahl 2020).

Up until the introduction of surveys and excavations of cultivated fields in Norway, the presence and development of the Iron Age settlement was inferred from known grave finds and preserved graves visible in the landscape (Dahl 2022). At Forsandmoen, the number of grave finds and their narrow chronology do not correspond well with a 2200-year-long and massive settlement. The discrepancy between the known grave finds and the large settlement illustrates a major challenge regarding representativeness and source criticism in the interpretation of settlement development. This discrepancy can also illustrate how divergent ways of interpreting the grave material produces conflicting images of different periods. All the known burials in Forsandmoen are from the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period. The construction of the burial monuments can be interpreted as indicating a time of growth and prosperity, or a need to argue and convince when power is disputed (Löwenborg 2012).

If we bring such an approach to the interpretation of the known grave finds from Setesdal, the society started investing in richly furnished graves from the eighth century. The pattern in the grave finds cannot be used to infer sparse settlement in earlier periods, as demonstrated by the material from Forsandmoen, but it may indicate larger transformations and possible disputes starting to appear at the same time as the abandonment of all the known settlement at Forsand. While they invested in constructing grave monuments in Forsandmoen solely in the Late Roman Iron Age/Migration Period, the richly furnished graves in Setesdal can indicate disputes and displays of power in the Viking Period. At the same time the character of the grave finds in Setesdal shows attention directed towards trade-related activities, interpreted as indicating trade places in Valle and Langeid. Valle and Langeid are located at the other end of *Skinnevegen*, and the route becomes a material link between two areas that seem to go through contradictory developments. The eighth century stands out as the age of large and interregional transformations, a time that happens to coincide with the introduction of a new type of furnace for iron production, although we do not have knowledge of many production

sites from that period (Rundberget 2015). The coinciding, but diagonally different images can be taken as an argument for related developments in the two regions. Further, the divergent patterns are seen as an argument against an intensified exploitation of resources governed by leaders seated along the coast. A sensitivity towards possibly fast changes and divergent local variations, linked in larger interregional contexts, might represent a fruitful path to avoid a linear and heavily generalised story of larger areas through longer periods.

Balancing fast changes and longer processes is challenging. We can imagine how material culture gained more attention during larger and more sudden transformations in society. In archaeology it might be easier to identify times of larger disputes and tipping points, like the lavish period at the end of the Early Iron Age in Rogaland. Pollen analyses can play a key role in directing attention towards both abrupt changes and longer time spans. Like the pollen analyses that changed the impression of the Iron Age farming in the valleys of East-Norway (Stene and Wangen 2017), the pollen samples from Forsandmoen show a change from less farming to more pasture already in the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period (Prøsch-Danielsen and Simonsen 1988). At the same time, many farm complexes were established in South-West-Norway in areas first and foremost favourable for grazing. Hence, both the unusually large settlement and the more frequent farm complexes indicate a strong orientation towards pastoralism. This trend coincides with the increased exploitation of the mountainous areas in southern Norway already from the beginning of the Iron Age (Myhre 2002), where the intensification of livestock grazing is most prominent in West-Norway (Stene 2015). Whereas some areas show an increased and diverse resource utilisation in the seventh century (Myhre 2003, p. 85), the settlement structure in Rogaland went through massive transformations. The material from larger regions imply that the beginning of the Late Iron Age represents a tipping point in a long-term transformation towards an increased emphasis on pastoralism.

An increased emphasis on pastoralism, both as an ongoing long-term trend in western Norway from the start of the Iron Age and as different steps of intensification through the Iron Age, has been suggested as a possible reason for the transverse movement of many buildings in the beginning of the Late Iron Age in South-West-Norway (Dahl 2016b). Such a development cannot explain the abandonment of an area characterised by its easy access to pastures. And while many of the other sites in Rogaland are being reused in the Viking Period both as dwellings and burial fields, the large settlement of Forsand went out of use. The reasons for the changes appear to be more compound (see Dahl 2009, 2016b). In the case of Forsandmoen it is tempting to suggest that the lines of communication broke down or were reorganised in such a manner that created an intermediary excess. In such a scenario the large settlement of Forsand would have lost the foundations of power and the necessary access to resources and exchange. At the same time, grave finds start to appear at the other end of *Skinnevegen*, indicating a movement of power disputes from the mouth of the fjords to the inner valley. While the inter-regional scarceness of finds in the later part of the Merovingian Period point towards a breakdown in the communication lines established in the LRIA, the local display of trade-related objects in graves indicates the presence of trade places in the later part of the Viking Period in Langeid and Valle. In the Middle Ages, *Skinnevegen* is the route for transport of cattle, butter and cheese from Setesdal to Stavanger, while grain, salt, herring, clothes and horses were transported the opposite direction.

We can expect different choices regarding strategies and developments in different regions. At this point it seems like the wide range of resource exploitation documented in the vast and heterogenous mountain areas of South-Norway might have been a successful strategy, in contrast to the impression we get from the decline and abandonment of the long-term settlement sites in Forsand. We need to ask whether the apparent lack of varied recourse utilisation is a result of bad strategic choices in the past or in the present. In South-West-Norway we have had a tendency to focus on the earliest farming in most pre-development projects. To gain more insights into the possible multifaceted resource utilisation in the Late Iron Age, as well as the entire Iron Age, we have to keep in mind that the Norwegian farms were not limited to farming.

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From the 9th century AD onwards, Norse migration resulted in the spread across the North Atlantic of cultural traits originating in Norway. The challenging landscapes of this region rewarded resilience and adaptability, evidenced by complex subsistence strategies incorporating the exploitation of a variety of outfield resources. However, differing methodologies and approaches across the region have limited the extent to which the connections between western Norway and the North Atlantic have been explored in archaeological research. The Expanding Horizons project brought together junior and senior practitioners in archaeology and related fields, from both within and outside of academia, to address this. The papers in this volume present case studies of outfield resource use and its impact on settlement patterns, placed in the wider context of Norse settlement and subsistence across the North Atlantic.

