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CHAPTER FOUR

DAWN OF A NEW AGE: 
THE LATE NEOLITHIC AS THIRD SPACE

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Introduction

The Late Neolithic in southern Scandinavia is a phase between two significant archaeological periods, namely the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. It is a period that can be described as ‘in-between’, and archaeologists have tended to understand the Late Neolithic as the less important period.

The far-reaching exchange network characterising the Bronze Age from its very beginning is most likely based on metal. Thus, the onset of the south Scandinavian Bronze Age may be viewed in correlation with the import of metal and emerging local production of bronze items although in the process of involving people, societies and different regions in all of Europe in pursuit of bronze, other exchange objects certainly came into play. Bifacial flint daggers were one of these exchange objects, which presumably were a result of ideas travelling along the exchange networks in the early metal age. Therefore, the period may be described as a Late Neolithic hybrid culture that emerged on the edge of European Early Bronze Age.

I will argue that Late Neolithic society in southern Scandinavia was a result of old Neolithic traditions innovated through inter-societal and intercultural encounters between local people and travellers. All together it must have created locations – places in the landscape – where established categories of knowledge were challenged (Soja 1998) and new perceptions of society and cultural identity were formed.
The Late Neolithic as a hybrid phase

Archaeologists have had problems defining the end of the Stone Age in south Scandinavia for more than a century (Vandkilde 1996, chapt.1). However, the appearance of bronze has in general been seen to represent a watershed for the division between the Stone Age and Bronze Age – as the terminology clearly implies.

The classical three period system – first introduced in 1836 by C.J. Thomsen – was a practical device, which allowed archaeologists to create typologies and chronologies to aid their research. In the late 19th and first half of the 20th century, this ‘scientific’ approach was defined by a need to create an operative access to the archaeological material, i.e. to create a methodological base for further investigations (Shanks & Tilley 1987:12ff.). Prehistory was presented as an evolution of objects reflecting the progress of mankind - all placed in time-spans of more or less length. This approach illustrates an evolutionary way of thinking in archaeology, the idea being of European society evolving through time from simplicity to complexity (Vandkilde in prep.). Consequently, the complex technology of bronze alloying was taken to indicate a higher level of development in society than the use of stone (Brøndsted 1939).

When establishing the six period division of the Nordic Bronze Age in 1885, Oscar Montelius wrote that he could have placed the beginning of the Bronze Age earlier than he did, because of the series of early metal objects from the Late Neolithic, that showed resemblance to south and west European bronze objects. Out of concern for the complete Bronze Age chronology, he finally decided not to. This would have resulted in a period I that was much longer than the other five periods. Even though he acknowledged that the periods did overlap with each other, making it difficult to place a precise transition between each period, he held on to the six phased 150 – 250 year division of the Bronze Age (Montelius 1885: 85,195ff.). Out of respect for the chronological system and the idea that prehistory evolved in time-spans of the same duration the Late Neolithic stayed Neolithic, so to speak.

Bronze is often somewhat uncritically viewed as synonymous with the emergence of stratified societies and chiefdoms in central Europe as well as in south Scandinavia (Kristiansen 1987, 1998; Sherratt 1994, Earle 2002), and this is in harmony with the underlying evolutionary thinking behind the chronological systems. On the other hand, chronologies and typologies are a result of past societies reproducing a selected part of their material belongings (Sørensen 1997). Therefore, material culture viewed in a holistic and contextual manner including all material aspects in an analysis should create a solid archaeological starting point. However, it would have been interesting to see how the evidence from the Late Neolithic had subsequently been interpreted if
Montelius had chosen to include it in his Period I of the Bronze Age. My guess is that the phase would have been assessed differently.

Fig. 1. A comparative chronological scheme (from Vandkilde 1996, fig.134).

The invention of bronze doubtless had a great impact on the formation and structure of the societies, and their interaction in most of Europe, but other factors were clearly at play, and the social and cultural alterations that started with the adoption of bronze in central Europe look different in north-western Europe. Due to the coexistence of pressure-flaked bifacial flint objects and bronze items, it could be argued that the period belonged to both the Stone Age and the Bronze Age.

Recent attempts have been made to analyse the Late Neolithic in south and central Scandinavia from a more Neolithic perspective. Klaus Ebbesen for instance describes the Late Neolithic as a part of an egalitarian farming society (Ebbesen 2004). Eva Stensköld views the Late Neolithic in the central and southern part of Sweden as the backdoor to the Neolithic period, and focuses on material relations which points back in time to the Middle and Early Neolithic (Stensköld 2005:20). This might be a reasonable point of view regarding northern Scandinavia where the bronze is more rare, but in the central (Lekberg 2002) and in particular the southern part the archaeological record shows clear indications of societies under transformation, as I shall argue below. By
focusing on the Neolithic aspects of the body of evidence from the period, it may be argued that the Late Neolithic period belonged to a Neolithic tradition, but in doing so the impact and meaning of bronze are underplayed.

By contrast focusing on the first items of bronze produced in south Scandinavia as the parameter of when the Bronze Age began creates similar problems because of the neglecting of the Neolithic elements. As a consequence, metal is often viewed as the most important factor in the interpretation of Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age societies (Kristiansen 1987, Sherratt 1994, Vandkilde 1996). Either way, it is not a nuanced picture of the Late Neolithic that is shown.

To break free of the purely chronological discussions one might instead describe the Late Neolithic period, perhaps including Bronze Age Period IA, as a hybrid or a so-called third space between the cultural formations of the Stone and Bronze Ages. The theoretical framework of this hypothesis is inspired by the post-colonial theoretician Homi Bhabha. According to him the concept ‘the third space’ is an ambivalent hybrid, a periphery of society located between dominant social formations where cultural differences and traditions may be articulated, re-articulated, negotiated, transmitted and transformed into new constellations of cultural meaning and identity (Bhabha 1994:38). The author’s research area is limited to historical colonial and postcolonial encounters, but the idea can be adopted and redefined in archaeological theoretical terms.

The cultural meetings in the early metal ages in northern Europe shall not in this case be seen as encounters between two historical known cultures which co-exist and therefore can be understood according to written sources. Instead they should be seen as intercultural meetings in special archaeological ‘hotspot’ locations, where social interactions and numerous third space encounters took place, simplified in a few recognisable situations and outlined in the limited archaeological material, which to some extent allows us to recognise social changes and new shapes of society taking form. These simplified ‘hotspot’ situations or locations should be understood according to the material record and the knowledge that can be retrieved from analysing it. It is not possible to get a nuanced impression of the structure of prehistoric societies compared to historic societies; therefore the analyses of third space encounters in prehistory can only be simplified and general in their expression in contrast to Bhabha’s own research cases. The idea of ‘hotspot’ or third space locations is in this text thought as a geographical space where the material record shows a substantial influence from different structured societies, and where the society in the third space ultimately changes into a new formation with an altered material expression as a reaction to the foreign influence. Moreover, these ‘hotspot’ locations are intended to be spaces of cultural interaction wherefrom cultural changes departure and spread through out a larger area. The third space may be
seen as a transformative border zone expressed by a hybrid material representation (Myhre 2005:187) - something new and altered, pointing back and forth in time and space to differently structured societies.

It can, somewhat hypothetically, be argued that third space or hybrid space occurs in the three period division of prehistory, where two constructed periods meet. The theory of third space presented by Bhabha is meant to be a theory of cultural behaviour in geographical space, but I will propose that the same theoretical framework can be adapted in a time perspective. In rethinking the three-period system it could be a solution to adapt the idea of the third space as a transitional phase in-between, in order to have a hybrid phase that were not bound to either period.

The idea of a Late Neolithic Period as a mixed phenomenon with both Neolithic and Bronze Age elements has implicitly been embedded in many researchers’ work (Lomborg 1973, Vandkilde 1996, 1998b, 2000, 2005, Apel 2001, Lekberg 2002). In this article however, I intend to make this condition of hybridism more explicit in the search for new interpretive pathways in the Late Neolithic research. Defining the Late Neolithic as a hybrid phase gives the option to look at the period isolated from the Stone Age and Bronze Age, and let it be analysed in its own right. An old term used for the Late Neolithic is “the Dagger period”, which might be a more neutral term for the phase.

**Tradition and transformation in Late Neolithic society**

**LNI**

In the last half of the third millennium BC large parts of Europe were inhabited by Bell Beaker groups, which were among the first to really use and exchange metal (Vandkilde 1996, Kristiansen & Larsson 2005). The Bell Beaker culture can be described as a pan-European culture phenomenon characterized by pottery of distinct bell-shape with either All-Over-Corded or so-called Maritime decoration. The notion ‘Beaker’ Culture more generally refers to Bell Beaker derived material culture across time and space, and specifically to pottery derived from, and therefore not fully identical to, Bell Beakers (Vandkilde 2005:2). Thus in northern Jutland during the LN I the material record shows a clear Beaker influence. The flint dagger takes over from the battle axes of the Single Grave Culture in male burials and becomes the prime weapon of the Late Neolithic (Lomborg 1973, Rasmussen 1990, Vandkilde 1996, 1998b, 2005). The region is described as a northern ‘Beaker pocket’ by Vandkilde⁴, whereas

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⁴ For further discussion of the Beaker phenomenon, see Vandkilde 2005.
the remaining southern Scandinavia has a deviating material culture with a much more indirect Beaker impact (Vandkilde 2005).

Material culture in northern Jutland changed rapidly in the first part of LN I - probably due to the contact with western Europe. The reason why it happened in this particular region in south Scandinavia can be explained in terms of the location near the North Sea with access to the Limfjord. In addition to the rich flint sources mined throughout the Neolithic (Lomborg 1973, Rasmussen 1990, Vandkilde 1990, Becker 1993, Vandkilde 1996). Yet, the society in northern Jutland may also have been generally open to social change, as well as socially complex, prior to the Late Neolithic, and therefore capable of establishing strong contacts with the Beaker groups. Vandkilde refers to this option as the main reason for the cultural success of the region (Vandkilde 2005:32). The Beaker influence most likely played a major part in initiating the production of bifacial lanceolate flint daggers in northern Jutland in Denmark; it was produced in thousands during the period (Fig.2). They were most certainly inspired by Bell Beaker copper daggers from the west European continent (Fig. 3) (Lomborg 1973:18ff., Vandkilde 1996, Apel 2001).

![Fig. 2. Type I daggers (from Lomborg 1973:32, Fig. 9).](image)

Flint daggers of Lomborg's type I were produced in four main shapes, of which type ID was made on the Danish islands (Madsen 1978, Wincentz Rasmussen 1990, Apel 2001). Especially the IC dagger demands highly skilled
craftsmanship from the flint knapper and the parallel-flaked surface of the dagger represents a unique technique probably only mastered by the most talented flint knappers in this particular region (Stafford 1998, Apel 2001). This enables comparative studies of the south Scandinavian flint daggers which were distributed over large parts of Europe, especially the lanceolate type I daggers. Such daggers occur as far away as northern Scandinavia, Poland, the Rhine delta and in graves in the heart of the Únětice culture in central Europe (Aghte 1989; Apel 2001:296ff.).

Fig. 3. Tanged flat dagger of ‘Dutch Bell Beaker copper’ found in Kongens Thisted, Aalborg County 1:4 (from Vandkilde 1996).

Moreover, the distribution of the flint daggers demonstrates that as early as the beginning of flint dagger production in Denmark, Rogaland on the Norwegian west coast was involved in the exchange of goods with Jutland
The exchange system shows clear evidence of long-term interaction between these two regions from the beginning of the Late Neolithic continuing into the Bronze Age. The two areas were probably in contact on a regular basis and it is likely that the contact was based on seasonal travels by ship, perhaps only crossing the tough North Sea in the summertime (Solberg 1994, Kaul 2002). The exchange of flint daggers from Jutland to Norway must have been necessary for the economy of the area, and its role as a link between south, west and north was most certainly influential in transforming the structure of society toward increasing complexity (Vandkilde 2005:36).

It can therefore be argued that the production of flint daggers in great numbers and their prominent position in a far-reaching exchange network required a social institution in control of both production and exchange. This may again suggest some form of leadership, but it is not easy, with our current knowledge, to determine on which level of complexity this elite acted. Due to lack of marked signs of social hierarchy in the archaeological record (Vandkilde 1998b:353) we can assume a high degree of social mobility and rivalry over resources and social positions fuelled by contacts with west European Beaker groups.

In summary, the social environment created in northern Jutland was unique and innovative from a Neolithic perspective, and social and material change did certainly occur during the first part of the LN I. The production of the lanceolate flint daggers may in fact be seen as the outcome of a hybridisation process contributing to making the region a ‘hotspot’. Bhabha states that the importance of recognising hybridisation is not to be able to trace two elements from which the third emerges, but rather to trace a new arena for hybrid material reproduction and representation (Bhabha 1990:211). Thus, the northern Jutlandish region in the LN I can be described as a transformative border zone – or third space – expressed by a hybrid material representation.

LN II

Society in the second half of the Late Neolithic period, LN II 2000-1700 BC, was certainly influenced by the general cultural impact of metal use that took off around 2000 BC (Vandkilde 1996). Metal was now exchanged from the continent across the Baltic Sea primarily to central and east Denmark and south western Scania. In the central parts of Europe, near the mining regions of Harz, Thüringerwald and the Erzgebirge, copper and bronze were produced and controlled by Unéticean groups in the river valleys and an abundant production of bronze objects initiated the beginning of the Bronze Age proper around 2000 BC.
The metal probably reached south Scandinavia from across the Baltic Sea by the northeast European rivers and especially by the river Oder. The massive metal production and exchange indicate social change towards a more complex hierarchical order with in part transformed social practices and religious ideologies, certainly in central Europe and possibly also in some core regions in south Scandinavia (Hansen 2002, Kristiansen 1998, Vandkilde 1999).

Metal objects were for the first time produced in fairly large numbers in south Scandinavia, but simultaneously the production of flint daggers reached a technological peak. This situation was probably caused by the emergence of metal objects, especially the triangular Early Bronze Age dagger, which may have encouraged flint smiths to make copies in flint (Fig. 4 - 5).
The outstanding flint technology is displayed in the perfect shape of the ‘fish tale’ dagger, and once again innovations and ideas from central Europe were reshaped in south Scandinavia. In central Europe, south Scandinavian flint daggers were still in circulation in the first part of the second millennia BC, but now in fewer numbers. In northern Germany several Danish flint daggers occur in hoards and graves during the LN I, but flint objects were replaced by metal objects in the LN II due to the massive bronze production in central Europe (Rassmann 2000). However, in south Scandinavia the tradition of depositing flint daggers in hoards and graves still had significance in the LN II, even though the number of flint daggers decreased in LN II, and this suggests a conservative attitude towards the new metal objects (Rassmann 2000). From an
economic and functional point of view it seems reasonable that in the core area of flint production the flint dagger were used for a longer period – or more likely, as long as the flint dagger could produce an acceptable technological and social alternative to the metal, it was used by people in south Scandinavia (Varberg 2005b).

However, this is probably not the only explanation why flint daggers were used during more than 800 years, and the last 500 years in serious competition with metal objects. The conservative perception and use of flint daggers in the Late Neolithic are almost certainly interlinked with their function as a symbol of male identity (Vandkilde 2000). The underlying idea is that daggers were given to boys becoming men in ‘rites de passage’, as a marker of their newfound social identity as men and perhaps even warriors.6

The social value of flint daggers in Late Neolithic societies must have been strong since only a small number of metal daggers are found compared to the large number of flint daggers. Instead of producing metal daggers, a large number of metal axes were made, but they are seldom found in graves – instead they were placed in mainly wetland depositions (Vandkilde 1996:36, 1998a:255). Flint daggers were sustained as a part of the male equipment in life and death, and we may assume that their function and meaning were associated with personal prestige, social identity and the human lifecycle. This may also be

5 2350 - 1500 BC.
6 However the flint dagger has also been interpreted as an item used in complicated death rituals (Stensköld 2004).

Fig. 6. Sketch of a Scandinavian flint dagger of type IV and a triangular bronze dagger dating to the classic phase of the Unétice Culture (Illustration Jeanette Varberg).
part of the explanation why the strong new wave of metal objects could not replace the flint dagger and associated meanings until the spearhead and sword of metal were introduced in the last part of the Nordic Bronze Age Period I – probably indicating more radical societal changes, including a different perception of being male (Vandkilde 1998a:256).

The function and meaning of flint daggers in the society of the early metal age may be perceived as a result of new ideas and changes already in the LN I, but in LN II it is more clearly seen as an old tradition striving to survive in competition with metal. The role of the flint daggers changed in some measure through time, due to shifting contacts with differently structured societies (Vandkilde 2000).

In the second half of the Late Neolithic period central and eastern Denmark and west Scania was the main centre of flint production and exchange with metal from the south and with flint to the north. The fish tail-shaped dagger originated here and hoards with a substantial number of metal objects show the increase of metal production and exchange7 (Vandkilde 1996). By comparison, flint objects in central and northern Scandinavia flint upheld its value as prestige objects (Apel 2001:217ff), and goods exchanged for flint and metal in central Sweden to the regions in south Scandinavia probably partly paid for the metal coming from the south to these regions (fig. 7).

The increased exchange activity in central and eastern parts of south Scandinavia can, furthermore, be traced in the development of house and settlement size. Recent studies mainly conducted by Magnus Artursson confirm that the house sizes increased rapidly and considerably around 2000 BC (Vandkilde 1996, Kristiansen 1987, Nielsen 1999, Artursson 2005a) and settlement structure in some parts of south Scandinavia even resembles village organisation. Moreover, the construction of houses in several instances shows a similarity with longhouses in central Europe, and they may be interpreted as chiefly buildings (Nielsen 1999: 163ff). This could according to Artursson indicate the rise of a stratified and more complex society in the final Late Neolithic (Artursson 2005c:63ff). The settlement Almhov just south of the Swedish city Malmö in southwest Scania exemplifies how the European exchange system can be traced in the local settlement structures. The settlement in question is preliminarily dated to LN II and Early Bronze Age Period IA. Two of the largest longhouses from this period were found at Almhov. The largest house was 37-39 meters long and contained a ritual deposition of flint axes and pottery. The smallest longhouses in the same region are by comparison only 9 meters long. Thus, the big houses at Almhov can clearly be interpreted as residences of an elite (Artursson 2005b:15). The famous LN II metal hoard from

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7 The two largest metal depositions in the LN II are the Pile hoard from western Scania and the Gallemose hoard from eastern Jutland (Vandkilde 1996).
Pile was found only 5 km away, suggesting that this particular region had a significant role in the Early Bronze Age exchange network (Artursson et al. 2005:513).

In search of third spaces in the landscape

In assessing exchange systems and travel routes in the Late Neolithic it is essential to consider the role of ships as a means of transport. Only a few boats have been discovered in Scandinavia (Berntsson 2005), but early rock carvings
in southeast Scania indicate that larger ships were known. At the Simris rock-
carving site, carvings of ships, horses, men and axes has been dated to the LN II
and Early Bronze Age Period I based on typology (Söderberg & Hellerström
2003:61). Rock-carvings have recently been interpreted as symbolic
manifestations of exchange contacts between central Europe and south
Scandinavia (Kristiansen 2002). The oldest engraved ship on a bronze item
dates back to the very beginning of the Nordic Bronze Age c. 1600 BC8 and this
type of ship may very well have its origin in the Late Neolithic period (Kaul

South Scandinavia consists of many islands, and therefore it is almost
impossible to imagine the societies here without ships. With major contact
routes across the sea, the places of meetings between persons from different
societies would be at the coast. The search for such third spaces of interaction
should therefore be connected with the coastal zone.

Fig. 8. The sword from Rørby, Western Zealand and its ship decoration
(after Aner and Kersten 1976).

The people who travelled along the exchange routes could be travelling from
different regions in Europe, therefore it is very likely that people in south
Scandinavia travelled to north, west and central Europe along the North Sea
coast and the continental rivers – as well as people from the north, west and
south reached the shores along the Baltic Sea and North Sea. These network
routes were probably not only established for the exchange of commodities, but
also for the exchange of knowledge – for instance knowledge about metallurgy.
Journeys initiated by the search of knowledge and commodities were probably a

8 The Rørby sword from western Sealand is dated to the last part of the Period IB in the
Bronze Age (Vandkilde 1996).
part of power strategies of elites suggesting that special esoteric knowledge retrieved from long travels was part of becoming an important person in a ranked society (Vandkilde 1999, Kristiansen & Larsson 2005:51).

![Image of geographical distribution of sites with Beaker pottery](image)

Fig. 9. Geographical distribution of sites with Beaker pottery (from Vandkilde 1996, fig. 289).

The Early Bronze Age exchange networks must have opened up different regions in Europe allowing travellers with certain alliances or powers to pass through safely and thereby suggesting that travelling was an accepted and well integrated act in the north and central European societies – most certainly caused by the need to distribute bronze throughout Europe (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005:48). Johan Ling has proposed that the Bronze Age rock carving areas in Bohuslän in west Sweden can be interpreted as third spaces, where different groups with different maritime and sedentary occupations aggregated and interacted. The extensive use of rock carvings is interpreted as: “Materialised reflection of friction and stress caused by contacts and meetings between a domestic and a non-domestic public with different concepts regarding time and space.” (Ling 2005:453). This interpretation is based on
iconographic markings in the landscape, but the idea of transformative border zones or third spaces by the sea can be transferred to more southerly places in Late Neolithic south Scandinavia where there are no or few rock carvings, but nevertheless clear foreign influences and changes in the material culture – such as in northern Jutland in LN I, and central and southeast Denmark and Scania in the LN II.

Searching for such third spaces in the south Scandinavian Late Neolithic, I propose to consider the distribution of hoards with objects of both flint and metal in the landscape, in combination with the location of settlements. The distribution of hoards with flint daggers show a clear preference for the coastal environments (Fig. 10) and this is still clearer when assessing the distribution of

Fig. 10. Geographical distribution of LN I flint dagger hoards in Denmark (from Vandkilde 1996, fig. 290).

9 In this text the focus is upon southerly Scandinavia, but the transformative border zones or third spaces along the exchange networks could probably also be identified in the landscapes along the rivers in continental Europe – suggesting that travels by ship along the water routes were the most common way of travelling.
imported metal objects (Fig. 11). This implies that these areas where inhabited with people who acted and reproduced society actively in the costal region. The settlement finds in LN I with Beaker pottery also tend to have a coastal overweight, along the shores of the Limfjord and along the coast of the North Sea (Fig. 9).

Fig. 11. Geographical distribution of LN I metalwork in Denmark (from Vandkilde 1996, fig. 184).

In general, we have relatively few settlements from the Late Neolithic even though the numbers have increased during the last 10-15 years. Therefore, the
settlement pattern should be estimated with caution, but it is evident that there is an orientation towards the sea even though the inlands also were partly inhabited (Simonsen 1996, Artursson 2005b). The settlement Bejsebakken by the Limfjord in northern Jutland is mainly dated to the first part of the Late Neolithic and is situated near flint resources on a hilltop overlooking the waters of the Limfjord. This settlement is significant for our understanding of society in LN I because of its clear Beaker affiliation and flint dagger production (Sarauw 2003, Vandkilde 2005). Moreover the location of the site by the sea affirms the impression that important traces of societal structures and agency are linked to the space between land and sea in the Late Neolithic Period.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the first encounters with Beaker groups took place in the northern part of Jutland along the shoreline, as the primary geographical space of intercultural meetings. In other words, it was here the first
steps towards Bronze Age society were taken. Cultural change occurs in interaction with other people and not in isolation. As a consequence of natural harbours connected to the North Sea and easy access to natural resources, this region was an ideal place for contact and starting point of exchange systems between the Danish area, Western Europe and Norway.

The central and eastern part of south Scandinavia is in LN II the core area for innovation and social complexity as pointed out by Vandkilde already in 1996 and substantiated by her in several studies. This phenomenon corresponds very well with massive influences from central parts of Europe. As in LN I the distribution of hoards with metalwork in Denmark show an orientation towards the coastal environment (Fig. 12). In addition, the location of the impressive Pile hoard in southeast Scania is within a short distance from the sea indicating that the same coastal orientation is present in the Malmö region around 2000 BC. Moreover, the settlement pattern in the region shows a clear orientation towards the sea compared with other periods (fig. 13). Thus, the south western part of Scania with a concentration around the Malmö region shows a radical expansion where the costal zone becomes permanently settled in the second half of the Late Neolithic Period (Vandkilde 2005:12, Artursson et al. 2005:513). The
settlement pattern in the Danish region is still not intensively studied, but settlements on the island of Bornholm and the peninsula of Djursland in eastern Jutland indicate the same pattern of often large longhouse-sites within the coastal zone (Vandkilde 2005, Artursson 2005b).

Again the areas near the sea, combined with contact overseas and natural resources, formed a successful environment for cultural processes and innovation. In southeast Scandinavia these coastal zones obviously must have been unique spaces where extraordinarily large longhouses belonging to emerging elites appear in the archaeological record, probably as a direct result of participation in communication and knowledge networks extending over large parts of Europe from 2000 BC and beyond (Vandkilde 1996, 2005, Nielsen 1999, Artursson et al. 2005).

In-between spaces – the Late Neolithic as third space

...it is in the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (Bhabha 1994:38).

Changes in social practices often happen on the liminal borders of society where intersocial encounters are able to create new structures. In this in-between space interaction, negotiation and misunderstandings involving differently structured societies were taking place, hence forming an interesting frame for the interpretation of cultural change and the transformation of materialities (Bhabha 1994, Giddens 1984, White 1991:15). In south Scandinavia in the Late Neolithic period it is difficult to get a clear understanding of how these meetings and negotiations between people actually took place. It is only through our understanding of ourselves as human beings, and the ability of archaeologists to bring to life the past from its remains that we can generate a synthesis based on the archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, this theoretical framework can give us a notion of how to interpret the material relations between different cultures and how to understand the nature of cultural change.

We do not know whether the meetings in south Scandinavia were of a friendly or a hostile nature, nor do we know the nature of the relationship that was created between the people living in the region and the people travelling in search for knowledge and commodities. We can only to some extent acknowledge the material result of the social processes that we try to reconstruct. One thing that we know with some certainty is that these intercultural meetings created a Late Neolithic hybrid culture on the edge of European Early Bronze Age societies where meaning and social practices were altered and transformed into new social structures. Old traditions were renewed,
reshaped and transformed through direct or indirect influence from other cultures - initiated by the search for and exchange with metal.

In the first part of the Late Neolithic it was in the north west of Jutland that cultural and social change first occurred and the coastal zones around the vast Limfjord and along North Sea can be described as special ‘hotspot’ locations, where established categories of knowledge were challenged, for instance as regard the perception of male identity and the production of flint daggers.

Around 2000 BC, in the second part of the Late Neolithic period, northern Jutland lost influence and ‘hotspot’ locations emerged in the archaeological record of the opposite region, namely central and eastern Denmark and southwest Scania. Especially the Malmö area in west Scania shows evidence of being a complex region with a hybrid material culture that to some extent was derived from central Europe. From these southerly regions of Scandinavia the Nordic Bronze Age successively took shape in an in-between space, and a new age began to present itself.

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