

# LONG TIME – LONG HOUSE

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## ABSTRACT

This article deals with the *longue durée* of the longhouse in terms of agrarian commitments, households and ontology from the prehistory of Rogaland. The three-aisled longhouse is one of the most long-lived forms of dwelling-place known from prehistory, spanning from the Early Bronze Age (1500 BP) through the end of the Viking period (c. AD 1050). During some 2500 years, the architectural outline and form remained surprisingly similar. The three-aisled longhouse is, in terms of human culture, a *longue durée institution*, a materialisation of a particular lived space. The aim of this article is twofold: First, I explore the tenets of this lived space, and its implications in terms of social practice with a particular regard to the life-space shared by humans and animals inside the longhouse. Further, I examine the dynamics between patterns of change in prehistoric societies and the longhouse that endures as a basic building block for the farming household. I use the ontological turn as a framework for thinking through both of these topics. I mainly focus on the archaeological record from the Early Bronze Age until the Viking period in Rogaland, SW Norway.

## THE FARMING PRACTICE AND ONTOLOGY

Being a farmer is sometimes a tough deal, it entails the loss of freedom to the agrarian commitment: to toil and sweat in the fields, making space, food, fertile soil for plants and animals, hoping that they will return your efforts manifold. This entails place-making, as in carving out a physical space where plants could grow, animals could live, reproduce and graze, etc. Such a way of life entails what I term the *agrarian commitment*, namely a pledge to a way of life in which farming is the dominant mode of existence, regarding economic strategies, social practice and cosmology, all aspects of a fundamental understanding of the

world – an *ontology*. In this article I try to tease out the ontology of the agrarian commitment as a way of life and as manifested materially in the three-aisled longhouses.

Ontology is the study of, and inquiry into, that which is understood as given. By this I mean that it grapples with the very foundational building blocks of the world – and moreover, how these building blocks are perceived by different cultures. Ontology is, then, not by its own nature fixed and stable, but it appears so by the way it is situated in time-space, within its own historical-cultural context.

Recently, there has been a return to inquiry into ontology in anthropology, and to a minor degree

in archaeology - frequently referred to as the ontological turn (most notably, Viveiros de Castro 1998; Kohn 2013; Latour 2013). For example, Kohn (2013) explores ontology as an interconnected web of emergent meanings. It is the web of meanings that give ontological status to beings. This is often termed *relational ontology*, meaning that ontological status springs from the sum of threads in the web - what Ingold (2011) refers to as meshwork. A bounce on the web travels along the threads and affects various entities.

Thus, a core idea situated in the midst of the ontological turn is that the nature of the world (ontology), is constructed just as much as knowledge (epistemology) is constructed. In a discussion article on the ontological turn, Fowles (in Alberti, Fowles et al. 2011: 898) argues that ontology springs from an understanding of origins and that ontology is anchored in narrative; “The world is as it has come to be.” My main argument follows Alberti (2011: 900), “I conceive of ontological inquiry as a means to insert a difference (...) in the present and in our accounts of pasts.”

Returning to farming practice, a fundamental aspect to the life-world of the agrarian commitment can be found in a cyclical understanding of time, and the turnings of the world at large. The life of a farmer is bound to the cycle of the year. The old Norwegian calendar *primstav*, a wooden stick with symbols carved into it, denotes special and auspicious stages of the farming year. The same *primstav* was used for every year and is a materialised witness to the cyclical nature of farming. Every year, lambs are born in the spring, the harvesting is done in late summer, and mid-winter is the time to sit still, eat sparingly and wait for the earth to come alive again. And so the seasons change, perceptibly, but maybe year to year less so.

The archaeological evidence of past agrarian commitments tells us something of the cyclical

nature of the farming year, but maybe even more so of the unchangeable nature of that which lies underneath. There are several strands of evidence that suggest that underlying the farming year was a belief in permanence, one cycle carried into another, seamlessly. One non-material strand is the dedication to the agrarian commitment as a steadfast way of life, unbroken for millennia. A material strand is the commitment to the three-aisled longhouse for a long stretch of time, in Norway as well as in other parts of Scandinavia, from the Bronze Age period I-II (c. 1700 BP) through the end of the Viking period (c. AD 1000). This way of building became an anchor for farm-life in all of northern Europe for centuries. In this article I will focus on farming in Norway, and especially in Rogaland and the west country, and how the agrarian commitment carved out a particular way of living that became a structure of long-lived duration. I acknowledge, though, that processes in Rogaland are a part of larger processes also found further afield in Southern Scandinavia and Northern Europe. Then I will examine one of the principles underlying this *longue durée*, namely the *duty of care* that is a fundamental premise for the agrarian commitment.

### THE THREE-AISLED LONGHOUSE - THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

In the Early Bronze Age, a monumental change in the planning and building of houses happened. This change is subtle and would not be very apparent from the outside, but inside it created a different vista and new possibilities: The transition from two-aisled to three-aisled longhouses. Such houses are found from the Bronze Age onwards in Southern Scandinavia and Northern Europe, the low countries and at Alpine lake sites (Harding 2000: 38)

The two-aisled longhouse is constructed with three rows of posts, the central of these is a line of evenly spaced, roof-bearing posts, an architectonic

structure that creates two loosely separated large length-wise rooms. By adding another, parallel row of roof-bearing posts, the construction changed, it became stronger and more stable, and the interior space became increasingly divided, into three lengthwise rooms, or aisles. The two rows of posts made for a greater number of posts inside the house, and it would be easier to, for example, separate off distinct spaces by using the posts to fasten walls, fences, screens, etc. Thus, the three-aisled house made for a more flexible use of the interior space.

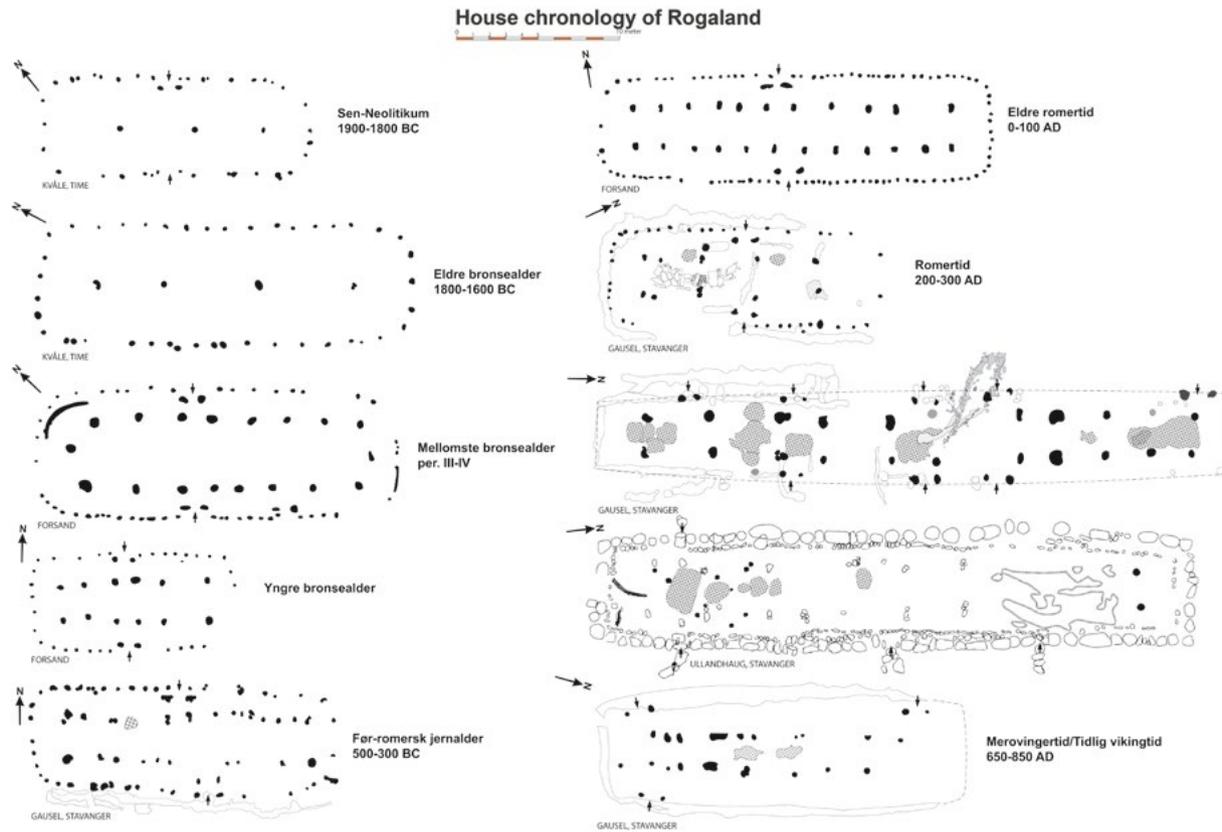
This architectural change is believed to be associated with a change in how animals were kept; they were moved into the three-aisled house and lived with humans (Tesch 1992: 290; Rasmussen and Adamsen 1993b: 138; Lagerås and Regnell 1999; Rasmussen 1999: 281; Årlin 1999). The transition is normally dated to Bronze Age period II (1800–1500 BP) although there are regional variations within Scandinavia. By the late Bronze Age, indoor stalling of animals seems to have been the norm in most of Scandinavia (see for example Tesch 1992, 1993; Rasmussen 1999; Zimmermann 1999; Årlin 1999; Streiffert 2001; Grön 2004). It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the empirical evidence from different parts of Northern Europe, Southern Scandinavia or even Norway in depth. Therefore, I will mainly draw on case studies from Rogaland, which is a region in Norway where house remains from the Early Bronze Age until the end of the Viking period are well-documented. I will also make use of sites from other places in Southern Scandinavia, when appropriate. However, the data from Rogaland is broadly speaking representative for processes that happen at a much larger scale, including most of Southern Scandinavia in the Bronze Age and Iron Age.

The factors that caused the architectural change are not properly accounted for in the archaeological discourse. A common assumption is that a result

of the architectural change was indoor stalling of domestic animals in one part of the house. In Early Bronze Age Jutland, a number of houses have well-documented byres with individual stalls (see e.g. Rasmussen 1999). Houses with byres are not found at this early date in Norway. However, I have suggested that in the case of Rogaland, underlying the architectural change was a drive to make space for sheep to facilitate lambing and early socialisation of individual sheep (Armstrong Oma in press). Individual stalls are thus not necessarily a critical feature for stalling animals indoors. That indoor stalling of animals was a reality is demonstrated by the remains of a house that burnt some centuries later at Nørre Tranders, in Jutland (Nielsen 2002), where the bones of animals were unearthed in the byre of a longhouse. No traces of individual stalls were found in this house.

It is commonly assumed that two-aisled longhouses were for human habitation only (e.g. Ethelberg et al 2000). Some archaeologists (Tesch 1992: 290; Rasmussen and Adamsen 1993a; Rasmussen 1999: 281; Lagerås and Regnell 1999; Årlin 1999; Armstrong Oma 2007; 2010; 2013a; 2013b) have previously suggested that the change to three-aisled longhouses happened due to a change in the perception of domestic animals, leading to them becoming household members and embedded in the life-space of humans. Thus, a more intimate human-animal relationship developed. On the basis of this, I suggest that in many houses, the household consisted of human and animal household members (see also Rasmussen 1999; Årlin 1999; Armstrong Oma 2007; 2010; 2013a; 2013b).

Figure 1 shows an overview of houses and house types from the Late Neolithic until the Viking period in Rogaland, but is also valid for the general development of houses in both Norway and Southern Scandinavia throughout these periods. The prehistory of settlements in Rogaland has been



**Figure 1.** The development of longhouses in Rogaland from the late Neolithic until the Viking period, a span of 3000 years. Note the transition from two-aisled to three-aisled that happened early, at the 1800-1600 / 1600-1400 transition. Figure by Ragnar Børshheim.

explored extensively over the last 30 years, and well documented. The figure shows that although there are changes through the eras, the architectonic features that define the ground plan of the houses remain remarkably consistent.

The French historian Fernand Braudel developed a model to describe the temporality of changes, both at a geological scale and at a biological scale – *durées* and *evenements*. The *durées* can be likened to geological eras, and are durable structures that underlie society (Braudel 2002, see also Bintliff 1991). It is tempting to think of the three-aisled longhouse in terms of

a *longue durée*, as something that remained a stable, unchanging and enduring feature over a very long time. This describes the phenomena but does not account for the underlying cause. Therefore, such an observation begs the question, why? What are the reasons behind, first – this choice of building and living, and, second – why it endured for such a long time?

Below, I investigate these questions with regard to the kinds of social relationships that the longhouse facilitated, particularly concerning the shared life-space between humans and animals. The tenets

for the discussion are briefly set out here, prior to a discussion of the houses themselves, followed by an outline of changes in other parts of society. Then, these questions will be re-examined in light of the evidence presented.

The Bronze Age longhouses from Southern Scandinavia could be termed post-domestication household arenas. These houses provided for animals that were fully domesticated and came from a long line of domestic animals, stretching back thousands of years in time. The post-domestication household arena thus signifies the physical environment where people and animals lived. The built environment provided preconceived choices determining how relationships could be performed within the household arena. Those choices were probably made with particular reference to human-animal relationships. Following the presentation of the case studies, I outline an argument to propose that by investigating the spatial organisation of the material remains of the household it is possible to extrapolate the physical meeting points between humans and domestic animals.

### **LONGHOUSES – LONG TIME: EARLY BRONZE AGE TO MIGRATION PERIOD**

In the following, I present some well-published case studies, mainly from Rogaland, that represent settlements throughout these periods to look at how longhouses develop through prehistory – what remains and what changes. This article is not an analysis of one case study, but rather attempts to build a synthesis based on an overview of case studies.

One of the earliest examples of a three-aisled longhouse is from Kvåle on Jæren (Soltvedt, Løken et al. 2007). Here, a three-aisled longhouse had been built on top of the remains of two two-aisled longhouses, with the transition dated to 1780 BP. The placement of the houses on top of each other suggests knowledge of the proper place for building

houses, indicating continuity from one mode of building to the other.

There is one site that in particular lends itself neatly to this study due to its great time depth and consistency, namely Forsandmoen, a prehistoric village occupied over a long period of time, from c. 1500 BP to c. AD 600. A multitude of house remains spanning two millennia have been excavated (for example Løken 1997; 1998; Dahl 2009).

The settlement was seemingly established around 1500 BP in the Early Bronze Age period II, and all houses are three-aisled. Altogether 254 house remains from this period demonstrate continuous settlement from c. 1500 BP to AD 600 (Løken 1997; 1998; Dahl 2009). All of the longhouses retain the same basic features – the rectangular shape and the three-aisled construction. Throughout the period, however, some variations occur, mainly in shape. There are also differences regarding preservation, the Iron Age houses are better preserved and easier to understand in terms of the inner use of space. Early Bronze Age houses were large, up to 23 m long and 8 m wide. At the transition to the Late Bronze Age the houses became smaller, and a marked division between areas for humans and areas for animals is seen. In the Pre-Roman Iron Age, the houses were about the size of the Late Bronze Age houses. Generally, 3–7 farms existed simultaneously throughout these periods.

With the onset of the Roman period, there is a drastic change in the settlement, the houses grow considerably larger, with a typical length of 30 m, although one 50 m long example was identified. Similarly, a 50 m long house from this period was excavated at Hundvåg (see Tsigaridas 1997; Meling this volume). Several large early Roman period longhouses have been found in other parts of Norway, famously the two Missingen houses in Østfold county, 61 and 50 m long (Bårdseth 2007), as well as others from Western Norway (see Diinhoff 2010). These

brief examples demonstrate that this development was not limited to Forsandmoen. More information about the household and its strategies can be gleaned from this period. For example, the human life-space and the animal life-space each have their own entrance, and there is a space for storage. The large houses have a large, open room in the middle, interpreted as a hall used for the lord to entertain his retainers, for feasting and suchlike.

During the Roman and Migration periods the organisation of houses in relation to each other change and they are placed in rows, forming a village-like structure. Each farm unit consists of two houses. As many as 19–20 farms are found simultaneously (Dahl 2009: 103), indicating that the population had grown significantly since the Bronze Age. On the basis of differentiated size, three social strata have been suggested, a high-status farm with a hall structure, used for feasting; a middle sized farm and a smaller sized farm (Løken 1997; 1998). A similar pattern is seen in the Roman period houses from the Gausel settlement (Børsheim 2001).

The settlement is abandoned for unknown reasons around AD 600–650. This is a pattern that is seen throughout Rogaland – all of the Migration Period farms are abandoned in this period (e.g. Løken 1997; 1998; Solberg 2003). Suggested reasons for this range from the Justinian Plague to climate change due to an environmental disaster to changes in social structure in which old settlements were abandoned and new were formed (see Iversen; Rødsrud; Stamnes, this volume).

### LATE IRON AGE HOUSES

Until fairly recently, little was known about settlements from the Merovingian and Viking periods (Myhre 2000; Sørheim 2009), and the Viking Period house excavated in the 1930s on Oma in Time was for many years hailed as the most important Viking Period longhouse (Petersen 1933). However, recent excavations have somewhat rectified this and several

Merovingian and Viking Period houses have now been unearthed (see catalogue in Hem Eriksen 2015 and also references in Bjørdal; Meling, both this volume). But for the most part, the recently excavated houses are not complete and do not render as rich an archaeological record as the earlier periods. Meling (this volume, references and table) describes the situation at Hundvåg, where altogether 7 three-aisled longhouses have been dated to the Merovingian and Viking periods. Most of these are only partly preserved but seem to have been c. 15–20 m long and 4–7 m wide. At Nedre Tasta, houses from the Viking Period were also excavated (Armstrong and Kjeldsen 2008).

In general, it appears, as Bjørdal points out in this volume, that there is a great variety in house types, ranging from longhouses that are very similar to the Early Iron Age houses, to smaller pit-houses, houses of “Trelleborg”-type (although these are also rectangular longhouses), to longhouses with concave walls that appear to be boat-shaped (see also Løken 1997; 1998). Nonetheless, while houses might be smaller and more variable, the basic form remains in most cases – that of three-aisled longhouse.

Meling holds that the Hundvåg houses commonly have separate rooms for animals and humans. Similar to Trond Løken (1998) and Lise Nordenborg Myhre (2004: 46–47), Meling suggests that each of these houses represent “a family based unit” who had ownership of the livestock. He further suggests that smaller buildings were homes to families without rights to keep animals (see also Løken 1998: 119). The buildings could, then, represent social stratification, as seen in other parts of society (see discussion of graves below).

### LONGHOUSES – SOCIAL UNITS AND BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SOCIETY

This short presentation demonstrates that although the basic architectonic premises of the three-aisled

house remains over some 2500 years, the houses themselves do not remain unchanged throughout the periods. There are changes in size (both length and width), placement of entrances and some internal features, use of the rooms and arrangement of houses in relation to each other (space does not permit a full discussion of these differences here). Although not examined in depth in this article there are also regional variations within Norway and Southern Scandinavia. Presumably, this diversity represents changes in social structure, such as the social stratification of society, population growth, definition of membership in individual households – the size of the household group, and space required to facilitate economic farming strategies, such as haymaking and storage.

Some of the changes are thought to reflect changes in social structure. For example, variations in size are often supposed to be related to an altered understanding of household membership regarding how big the “in”-group is. A large house can accommodate a larger number of people and animals. It can also account for differences in economic strategies, such as a husbandry-based way of living, or subsistence strategies based on cereal cultivation. Or, a large central space, such as seen in the Roman period houses from Forsandmoen, could accommodate special events such as feasting and other gatherings of community members.

What is not changed throughout the prehistoric periods is the longhouse itself. The basic layout, the rectangular (sometimes with slightly concave walls) shape of the longhouse, the placement of the trestles – as pairs, and a tendency for a partition into two sections, roughly evenly sized, stay unchanged. The longhouse remains an institution, a fixed way of building, which speaks volumes considering the embedded *habitus* of living.

Before I explore the implications of this, I wish to briefly investigate other aspects of society, and look

at how the material record shows changing versus durable practices, and how these can be understood as illuminating larger changes in society.

### LONG TIME, GREAT CHANGES – MORTUARY PRACTICES

Even though the longhouse persists for a long time, other aspects of society are not static and unchanging. Burial customs, material culture and cultural exchange are but some of the changes in the archaeological record that fluctuate. Let me illustrate this using the changes in burial customs: A number of factors regarding burials change throughout this long time period, both regarding the manner of rituals, the way that graves are constructed, the treatment of the dead and the inclusion of grave goods. In the following, I use examples from Rogaland, but the examples are reflections of larger-scale processes and serve well to exemplify these (see for example Harding 2000; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005 for broad descriptions of mortuary practices in the Scandinavian Bronze Age, and Solberg 2003; Hedeager 2011 for broad descriptions of Iron Age mortuary practices in Scandinavia).

One factor that distinguishes the Bronze Age from the Neolithic is the construction of large grave mounds built for individuals, as opposed to the Neolithic megaliths known from other areas of in Europe that functioned as mass graves (e.g. Scarre 2007). In Rogaland, the mounds appear in Bronze Age period I-II, at roughly the same time as the three-aisled longhouses start appearing (e.g. Nordenborg Myhre 2004; Syvertsen 2005; Austvoll 2014). The early mounds are massive monuments, their size often accentuated by their strategic placement in the local topography, on natural hilltops. They are also often placed with regard for visibility, not only from the surrounding areas on land but also from the sea (Nordenborg Myhre 2004; Syvertsen

2005). The mounds that have been excavated show the graves of individuals, both women and men, placed on their backs with status objects made from bronze. Women were buried with richly ornate jewellery such as belt plates, tutuli, bracelets and neck collars, and often a dagger (Myhre 1979; Syvertsen 2005). Men were buried with weapons, swords and daggers. Some of the graves hold chambers with slabs bearing rock carvings (Syvertsen 2005).

At the transition to the Late Bronze Age, there is a marked change both in the treatment of the dead and in the manner of burial. The dead are cremated, and the burnt bones placed in urns, with small and simple jewellery, weapons or objects interpreted as implements for self-care, such as razors, pincers and ear scoops (Treherne 1995). These latter objects led Paul Treherne (1995) to suggest that they express particular ideals of beauty. The urns with burnt bones were often placed as secondary burials in the large mounds from the Early Bronze Age.

With the onset of the Pre-Roman Iron Age, the custom of cremating the dead and placing them in urns remains, but the urns are now placed directly in the ground, sometimes the grave is marked by a low mound but often there is no marker that is visible today. Grave goods become scarce, towards the end of the period simple pins and fibulas are sometimes found. Status markers, such as ostentatious grave goods and massive monuments, are absent (e.g. Solberg 2003). Could this denote a society in crisis – or, an egalitarian society, in which status markers were obsolete?

In the Roman Iron Age, burial customs retain features from the Pre-Roman Iron Age as well as branching out in new directions, and are more than anything noted for their great diversity. The dead are often cremated together with animals, and both human and animal bones are placed together in urns (Mansrud 2004a; 2004b). The urns are no longer only simple pots but can be large bronze cauldrons

imported from the Roman Empire (Hauken 2014). The urns are placed in a range of monuments and in different landscapes. For example, large cemeteries are found along the stony beaches of Jæren, where graves are marked by stone settings constructed in a range of shapes, from star-shaped and rectangular to oval and circular (Lillehammer 1996[1985]; Bukkemoen 2007). In these cemeteries, graves are found from the very beginning of the Roman Period until the Merovingian Period. Even though the majority of graves from the Roman Period are cremations, inhumations become common at the end of the period.

In the Migration Period, inhumations are common and the dead are sometimes placed in chamber graves covered by mounds. The dead in these graves are frequently richly adorned with fine textiles and ornate jewellery, often decorated with Sahlins style I (Kristoffersen 1995), an animal based decorative style.

The opulently rich graves from the Migration Period come to a halt in the Merovingian Period, in which both the grave marker and the grave goods become low-key and inconspicuous. There is a marked decrease in the number of graves, as well as a change in grave goods, to a simpler set-up with simple tools and simple ornaments (Solberg 2003). However, some graves remain that are more elaborate in their visual communication, such as the male graves with horse equipment (Meling 2000; 2014).

The pendulum swings again with the onset of the Viking Period, and a large variety of graves are seen, ranging from the lavish, such as the presumed grave of Harold Fairhair at Avaldsnes (Grønhaug, see Opedal 1998), and the grave of the so-called Gausel Queen, with the spectacular horse bridle (Bakka 1993; Meling 2014), to more modest graves. A common feature in the Viking Period are boat graves, and although the west country lacks the magnificent ship burials found in Vestfold, several boat graves have been excavated during the past few

decades, such as at Gausel (Børshøj 2001). These graves attest to a maritime orientation. Overall, the mortuary practices in the Viking Period suggests both physical as well as social mobility, and social stratification.

Even though the treatment of the dead, the construction of the burial and the grave goods change throughout the Bronze- and Iron Age, this short review of the basic patterns demonstrates that there is at the same time some continuity, but also significant changes.

From one period to another, the changes build incrementally on previous practices and retain features from earlier times, so there is no distinctive break from one period to another. For example, the urns with burnt bones from the Late Bronze Age are placed in the large mounds from the Early Bronze Age. And the urns with cremated remains continue through the Pre-Roman Iron Age, although they are moved away from the mounds and the grave goods change. Barbro Dahl demonstrates this in her study of a grave mound at Håland in Time, which was in use over a period of 2000 years (Dahl in press)

This short presentation of mortuary practices throughout the period demonstrates that there are significant changes in for example the material expression of social hierarchies, in the beliefs expressed in the treatment of the dead, and also the manner and location of final resting place. These are not trifling matters, based on fashion and likely to change, but rather deep-seated beliefs rooted in religion and philosophy. Thus, we can surmise that many aspects of society changed rather drastically throughout these periods. For example, Anders Kaliff (1998) has suggested that the change from inhumation burials in the Early Bronze Age to cremations in the Late Bronze Age is related to a shift in the perception of the soul: the cremation pyre was meant to free the soul so that it could rise upwards.

Yet, these changing beliefs do not express themselves in architectural choices. The changes in mortuary practices cannot be separated from wider European historical processes, encompassing both changes in environment, adaptive changes to agricultural strategies, decimations of populations by starvation, plagues and diseases as well as political changes and power shifts, such as the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. Remarkably, the farm as longhouse remains throughout all of these upheavals. Confronted with the changes in the mortuary record, it seems that the three-aisled house is, indeed, a kind of *longue durée*. In the following sections, I explore possible reasons underlying the longevity of the longhouse.

### LONGHOUSE AS *HABITUS*

One way of understanding the permanence of the longhouse is to think of it along the lines of *habitus*. This concept was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu and has become a widespread model for understanding societies in the archaeological discourse, to the extent that it barely requires introduction. Very briefly, it can be explained as follows: *Habitus* is “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*”, and “the mode of generation of practices” (Bourdieu 1977: 72, original emphasis) within any society. The *habitus* is the everyday actions that we perform, the choices we make without reflecting on them, and the way that our past actions are carried into the future. Bourdieu stressed the importance of practice, which constitutes how life is lived, according to structuring principles that together form the *habitus* of society. He described *habitus* as being in its own nature an assemblage of dormant dispositions; it is constituted to, and oriented towards, practice, structured within structuring dispositions; it is orchestrated, but without a conductor (Bourdieu [1980]1990: 52–53). It follows that those that are within a *habitus* organise their life according to their embodied

dispositions, which are simultaneously experienced history inscribed within their bodies, and also the templates that structure the way future practices are generated. But *habitus* cannot be grasped, it is not by itself anything that is material. Still, the durable dispositions are carried out in a material world, and so the structuring principles can imprint themselves upon that world. I suggest that the three-aisled longhouse became such an imprint. As such, it could become a very stable part of society, that provided and facilitated a durable disposition.

Further, I suggest that the imprinted *habitus* that the longhouse was, provided a base – a spatial setting – for the household practice, and one aspect of this was the byre, the animal section of the house. Although not all longhouses had a byre, they all had the potential for it and were constructed in such a way that facilitated this spatial segregation. This is where the human-animal relationship was situated – *habitus* in this case formed in the day-to-day interaction between all participants. Within this setting, practice was anchored by structuring principles, such as architectural layout, activities, material culture and agents. Structuring principles are a way of organising one's actions and dealings with the world within a framework (Barrett 2000). Rather than a passive form of structuralism, it is a system of active categories that forms a drive in which agents can operate within their own *life-space* and with the world at large (Giddens 1984). *Life-space* here denotes the choice of living arrangements and the structuring of these, such as whether to live with animals or live apart from them – here termed shared or non-shared *life-space*. Opting to live with animals has a profound impact on the lives of humans, as animals, through their demands of being tended and taken care of, create specific patterns of living in the human society. As such, humans and animals become naturalised parts of each others' experience of life. This implies that not only do humans domesticate

animals but humans themselves are to a certain degree domesticated *by* animals.

### DUTY OF CARE AS A STRUCTURING PRINCIPLE

In the following, I attribute weight to the partition of the house into byre and human *life-space*. I argue that such a set-up was a response to a specific ethics of care in which humans responded to the needs of animals and instead of only using animals and their materiality by killing them, there was a sense of, and possibly a need to, care for the animals by giving back. Giving back could manifest in practices such as building shelters, aiding during giving birth, providing food by collecting grass, leaves, bark, and ultimately more complex strategies that involved storage, such as haymaking. From the animals' perspective, what better servants could they have than these humans who clear and guard pastures, build shelters, bring water and food, and so on.

I understand such practices under the umbrella-term *ethics of care*. This term is associated with *duty of care* and is normally used in social sciences and particularly in medicine and nursing to denote the duty and practices of protecting, nurturing and caring for those that are weak, sick, injured or disabled. But it is also a much wider term, and in UK legislation, duty of care is implemented in the Animal Welfare Act<sup>1</sup>. In a broader sense, it denotes the duty of behaving in such a way to others as to not do them harm, but to protect them – and it is in this sense that I extend this notion to animals in the past.

Introducing an ethics of care into the domestication discourse discloses an attitude in which the relationship between humans and domestic animals is seen as asymmetrical. However, this does not necessarily imply that animals are mindless creatures, Cartesian automata, or slaves devoid of agency that

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-welfare-act-2006-it-s-your-duty-to-care>

were completely dominated by humans. I acknowledge that animals have the capacity for agency, in line with the growing interdisciplinary recognition that many animals possess characteristics such as intelligence, emotion and awareness that vary from humans by degree rather than kind (see for example Shapiro and DeMello 2010; DeMello 2012).

As in the humanities at large, human agency has been granted supremacy in archaeology. Ontologically, the nature of being is the nature of human being; the nature of action is of human action (Johannsen 2012: 305). But animals are more than cultural abstractions: what is lacking is considerations of the animals *as themselves*. Animals are alive, active participants in their worlds, and the spaces where those worlds intersect and enmesh with humans are often messy and difficult to divide into clean compartments. In addition to how humans “use” them, animals often take part in subjectified relationships with humans that impact both species at various levels of scale (e.g. Birke, Bryld and Lykke 2004: 172–173).

Recognising animals as active co-creators of the world (Haraway 2003; 2008) has a particular relevance for farming societies. By way of their sentience, animals possess agency by their ability to purposefully act upon the world, unless severely physically restrained. On the farm, space is created, shared and mutually constituted by humans and domestic animals. Meanings arise and practices are constituted as joint actions unfold; whilst herding, milking, plucking wool, walking together, resting together, and creating spaces, thresholds (Armstrong Oma 2007). The consideration and care in which individuals are allowed to carve out their personal place is created everywhere on the farm.

### **RELATIONSHIPS EMBEDDED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE**

To study human-animal relationships it is imperative to start with the actual, physical encounters. Within

the framework of archaeology, this means beginning with an understanding of the spaces where the relationship was expressed. Humans and animals carried out their lives together in and around buildings and in pens and fields in the landscape. Space is constructed according to preconceived choices, made before the building process proper commences. Preconceived choices give rise to particular life-spaces that are shared by its members – that could include both humans and animals. Life-spaces go beyond Ingold’s (2000) concept of dwelling (a term he in later years has abandoned, see Ingold 2011: 12). Life-spaces are, simply, spaces where life is made to happen. Rather than dwelling, life-spaces embody Ingold’s new brain-child meshwork – the web of life, entangled, enmeshed and interwoven lines, where primacy is given to the lines in-between the nodes in the network rather than the nodes themselves (Ingold 2011: 63). Life is lived along lines rather than in points, constantly unfolding, ever surpassing itself. There is no beginning nor end, only a middle. And this middle is “an endless path, along which wayfarers travel” (Ingold 2011: 12–14). I see the meshwork as the threads of relationships, that allows a focus upon the act of relating, a shift away from perceiving agents as freestanding monolithic nodes. Life-space is a ploy to study relationships, and relationships happen in a meshwork – here, there and everywhere; both in-between and across the walls, fences, pens that humans build to create the framework for their lives. For example, when life-space is shared by humans and animals together, their actions become intermingled and flow through space and time together (Armstrong Oma 2007: 161–163). Life-space is thus both an analytical tool and a physical phenomenon.

Life-space can be studied archaeologically by considering architectural choices embedded in excavated remains of houses and their layouts. House plans can reveal structuring principles, and since these act

as anchors for practices, they are fundamental to the construction of space and reveal choices made prior to construction.

Friction arises when the preconceived space is put into use and becomes a place of experience. Out of this tension grows relationships, sometimes in novel and unforeseen ways. Building upon this, I argue that one way of studying human-animal relationships in the past is to look at spatial constructs that accommodate both human and animal agents. Investigating kinds of spatial designs allows for a consideration of the preconceived notions – dispositions – that underlie social choices. Effectively, spatial constructions would restrict or allow access for human and animal agents, thus regulating the degree of proximity between them, and ultimately create the framework for how their relationships would develop through the process of living – or not – together.

Returning to the main questions in this article: How is the longhouse a part of the *longue durée*? – in this context begs the question: Is living with plants and animals a part of the *longue durée*? How are these other beings so deeply embedded in the farmscape and lifespace that they are fundamental to being? Partly, the answer surely lies in their immutability, the cyclical nature of farming life, in which life is centred around animals and plants, individuals die, but the life force of the flock, the plants and the family remains.

The farmhouse as an anchoring point brings all of these farming practices together. The farmhouse can thus be seen as an ontology unto itself, the basic framework upon which every aspect of life depended. The framework of the longhouse appears to have been a physical, spatial as well as embodied, structuring principle upon which social relationships were given meaning and were played out. In this article I have focused particularly upon relationships between humans and animals and how the longhouse became a physical embodiment of their

relationship. However, inter-relational aspects to society such as gender, age and ethnic identities can also be explored from the longhouse as a structuring frame for practice.

The longhouse was – for 2,500 years – the world as it had come to be.

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