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## Comments on Remodelling the Neolithic in Southern Norway

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Different theoretical frameworks obviously create a great variety of constructions and understandings of the past. As in other historical groups of subjects, the research concerning Neolithization has undergone fundamental change during recent decades. Lisa Bostwick Bjerck's article shows how the interest, besides the environment, has focused on internal and external relations, where cultural factors are regarded essential in the discussion of the Neolithization.

This remodelling of the Neolithic in southern Norway should be seen in the light of the debates in earlier editions of the *Norwegian Archaeological Review* (Zvelebil & Rowley-Conwy 1984, with comments; Berglund 1985, with comments) and other recent publications. The close relation between the archaeological and palynological records and a wide geographical perspective are of mutual interest. The ideas of change are different, however, and so are the interpretations of the source material.

Lisa Bostwick Bjerck has a critical opinion in attacking problems and analysing source material. The discussion of the fundamental evidence, the loose finds, the settlements and the pollen diagrams thus provides an important contribution to the debate on Neolithization, valid for whatever area that is under discussion.

The research position is under reconsideration due to many circumstances. The formation process of the archaeological record is a general problem (Schiffer 1972). The archaeological material, 'the filter', is not sufficient to evaluate the subsistence pattern or the duration of a settlement. It looks rather pessimistic.

Fortunately there are open gates. Lisa

Bostwick Bjerck mentions the need for archaeological context information (Madsen 1985:93). In addition, the ongoing discussion concerning the interpretation of pollen diagrams might result in a more detailed analysis of the exploitation of the landscape. But above all she emphasizes the cultural processes involved and the need for a re-examination of the meaning of different kinds of artifacts.

Concerning southern Norway, she states quite another construction of the Neolithic than that expressed before. The archaeological and the palynological records in the different parts of southern Norway, however, are divergent. In spite of this she offers some interesting remarks. Why should the initial transition phase not be similar in the east and the west? Following the possibilities that later on the ecological and cultural conditions make agriculture more or less suitable. Still, I imagine that there is a need for more detailed excavation and analysis (for example petrographical analysis of the loose finds) over the whole area to confirm her own or earlier ideas.

There are no prerequisites for analysing changes but I would like to make some more comments of a more general character. The first is that one has to have the ability to see things from other points of view. Second, there are some starting points. One already mentioned in Lisa Bostwick Bjerck's article might be important in the discussion of accepting or refusing new ideas and models.

1. *Approaches to human beings.* Approaches to human beings are related to different philosophical points of view. The idea of man characterizes the understanding of society and how it is analysed. Is man a

biological being closely tied to instincts (an ecosystem-man) or a culture human responding to decisions in the current social constellations (Welinder 1985: 95 f.; Tilley 1981: 365)? 2. *The importance of corn and cattle*. Research on Neolithization has been strongly affected by abstractions denoting economic activities. A special problem is to find out whether or not the earliest agriculture and stock-raising were essential to the survival of human beings. The records give some information. The theoretical framework and the ideas of how and why people change their way of living are, however, of vital importance. 3. *The use of cultural and period divisions*. Research on Neolithization has also been strongly affected by the abstractions denoting cultural groups and periods. The variations in the utilization of the concepts can create a basis for questioning and interpreting source

material and perspectives, instead of leading to a rigid conception of the course of events (Jennbert 1984:16, 128 f.). 4. *Time dimensions*. The concept of time is tied to, but nevertheless often neglected, in the discussion of cultural change. Was the transition to farming a slow and gradual process or a rapid one?

Lisa Bostwick Bjerck's article thus gives an example of the complex relations between different kinds of source material and perspectives. It offers new dimensions to the debate on culture and nature. Seen from 'the South', the re-modelling of the Norwegian Neolithic is written in a logical thought-provoking manner. Attacks on traditional problems are greatly appreciated as new questions always have to be asked. It is impossible ever to say—so it was—or to just write in the spirit of for example Baudelaire.