



LUND UNIVERSITY

Peopling the landscape. The Landscape-variable, invisible, and visible

Jennbert, Kristina

Published in:

Form, function and context : material culture studies in Scandinavian archaeology

2000

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Jennbert, K. (2000). Peopling the landscape. The Landscape-variable, invisible, and visible. In D. Olausson, & H. Vandkilde (Eds.), *Form, function and context : material culture studies in Scandinavian archaeology* (pp. 51-57). Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University.

Total number of authors:

1

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Peopling the Landscape

The Landscape — Variable, Invisible, and Visible

Kristina Jennbert

Abstract in Swedish

Människor lever med landskapet och förhåller sig till sina omgivningar. Landskapet blir därför laddat med kulturella budskap. Fragment från olika tider med olika funktioner och betydelser är lagrade i landskapet som arkeologiska arkiv.

Jag tolkar landskap som en del av den materiella kulturen, som arkeologer har att arbeta med. Kullahalvön i nordvästra Skåne är utgångspunkten för mina landskapsarkeologiska studier. För att illustrera ett sätt att närma sig dåtiden väljer jag att i artikeln fritt kåsera om funderingar under en vandring på Kullen. Det förhistoriska landskapet är frånvarande men ändå närvarande under min vandring. Under årtusenden har det skett rumsliga omstruktureringar av landskapet och landskapet är därför en symbios mellan förflutenhet och nutid. Jag uppfattar landskapet som både en funktionell och symbolisk typ av materiell kultur och integrerar därför källmaterial och metoder från skilda ämnesområden i min landskapsarkeologi. Frågor, både vardagsnära och existentiella är betydelsefulla för att kunna nå större kunskap om de olika rum som människor har existerat i.

*Kristina Jennbert, Institute of Archaeology, University of Lund, Sandgatan 1, SE-223 50 Lund, Sweden.
E-mail: kristina.jennbert@ark.lu.se*

Landscapes are made, moulded, and remoulded. People live in interaction with the landscape, they relate to their various environments. As a consequence, the landscape is saturated with cultural messages. Several periods are stored in the landscape, and it is this that makes the archaeological study of an extended timespan so fascinating.

The study of the landscape is in fashion, and is being conducted in a number of disciplines. From a political and public perspective issues involving the landscape have become quite sensitive, since property development and agricultural restructuring affect people in their own neighbourhoods.

Archaeological publications of the last few years reflect the recent fascination of many archaeologists with the study of the landscape. It has not, however, affected them in the same manner as those earlier studies of settlements favouring a more functionalist approach. Sev-

eral recent scholars (Barker 1991, Bender 1993, Bradley 1993, Barrett 1994, Tilley 1994, Johansen 1997) have provided the archaeology of the landscape with several stimulating and inspirational discussions and interpretations. In many respects I subscribe to perspectives as well as approaches in these studies of the landscape.

Landscape as material culture

Landscapes are, in my opinion, part of the material culture that is the object of the archaeological profession. Like those other topics discussed at this conference—finds, monuments, crafts, the human body—landscapes are active and integrating elements in the creation of the human and social setting. Like the theatrical stage the landscape is a social product, and everything that happens in it is charged with human relations.

The landscape is moulded by processes caused by nature and people in co-operation. It may be characterized as the product of a certain specific society, its cultural preferences and potentials, and of the local geomorphological conditions (Sporrong 1993:71). The landscape is a cultural product in which nature and culture cannot be regarded as opposites—they constitute an integrated whole.

The nature–culture relationship has been, and still is, the topic of a continuing discussion. This discussion also serves as criticism of the way our civilisation thwarts our chances of finding an access to the past. Our own age abounds in ethical debates on whether people share with animals and trees the quality of being natural objects, or whether people, while taking precedence, also have obligations towards the whole of nature.

Criticizing the so-called “Deep Ecology”, the French philosopher Luc Ferry has published a book on this dilemma, *L'ordre nouvel écologique: L'arbre, l'animal et l'homme*, 1992 (English translation, *The new ecological order*, 1995). In the summer of 1997 his theses caused me to speculate once more on how on earth we, members of the archaeological profession, can get closer to the prehistoric world.

There is obviously a great challenge in attempting to rid ourselves of the bias that—through the industrialisation, mercantilisation, and urbanisation of the last few centuries—has crippled Western thinking and contributed to the fragmented existence of post-modern society. The relationship between people and nature has never been constant, and is likely to have been, before the Enlightenment, completely different from 20th-century conceptions of it. The partitioning of nature and culture cannot be maintained when studying the past.

The concept of landscape as material culture implies that the landscape abounds in qualities and characteristics. It is these characteristics that must be discovered; geomorphological evidence as well as cultural evidence, settlement or burial sites, production or sacrificial centres. The landscape also has a “social structure”, based on economy, society, myth, and cosmology. Thus, people of different ages, separate gen-

ders, and all manner of social standing, have left their marks individually or collectively on the landscape, which in turn has left its mark on them.

As a result, the structured and social landscape will contain a number of stages filled with significance. But since these significances of the landscape have a relational meaning, different stages will be created and demarcated on different levels, on the micro or macro level. Whether the mental concept of a stage involves an isolated locale or a larger region will thus be dependent on whether the actors are seen as individuals, or as a group or a family. Thus, *individual*, *group*, *time*, and *stage* are crucial concepts in archaeological studies of the landscape.

Of course there will never be a static landscape in which people are nothing but visitors. During the passage of time people have made use of, transformed, and experienced the landscape in various ways, as so evocatively demonstrated by the historian Simon Schama (Schama 1994). The long-term changes in form, function, and significance are due to the inherent dynamics of the landscape.

Interdisciplinary methods

Among the sources of inspiration for my study of the landscape is the concept of *mentalité*, as introduced by the *Annales* school, but also phenomenology. In this sort of work archaeology, ecology, and methods from Quaternary geology are extremely important for the critical evaluation of archaeological source material in a region with a changeable climate, changeable coastlines, changeable biotopes, changeable economic systems and settlement structures. Consequently, methods from the tradition of settlement archaeology, as well as methods from Human geography and Quaternary geology, are needed so as to form a basis for further interpretations of the landscape.

However, the practice of conducting landscape studies from a traditional settlement archaeological or more explicitly functional perspective has recently been criticized by those who wish to study landscape from a more men-

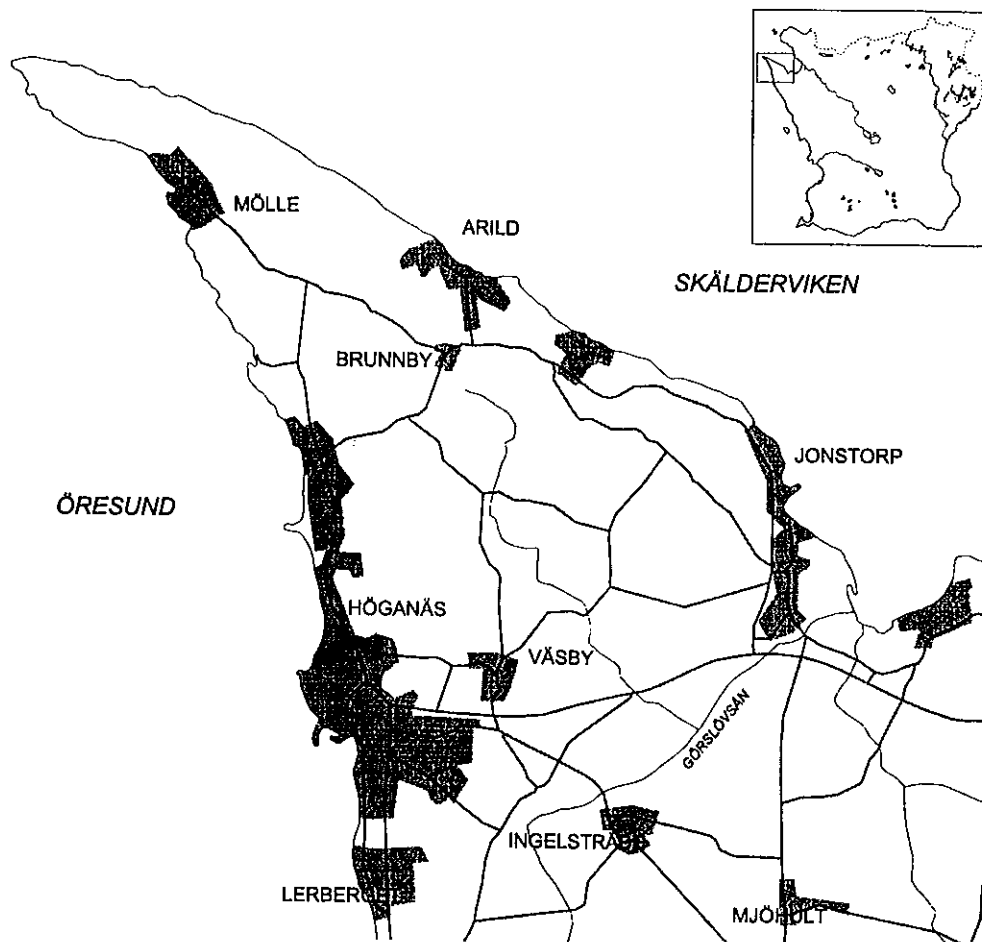


Fig. 1. Kullahelvön (The Kullen Peninsula).

tal and personal perspective. I do believe that the traditional perspective, a bird's-eye view yielding dots on a map, is a necessary part of landscape archaeology. The traditional perspective does not contradict but rather enhances a frog's-eye view when we are trying to understand peoples' experience of the landscape.

Kullahelvön (the Kullen Peninsula)

After these introductory remarks I shall now present the particular section of the landscape that I have elected to study, and to which I have devoted the last couple of years. I have chosen—or been chosen by—*Kullahelvön*, a region in the northwest of Skåne (Fig. 1) which in addition to artefacts and monuments offers a

landscape in constant transition. My interest is the entire prehistoric period. Another archaeological project focussing on the area is *Borgen i bygden* (Manor and Country), which is primarily concerned with medieval remains—the 14th-century manor of Krapperup and the surrounding countryside (Carelli & Salminen 1996).

What I want to discover are the various phenomena that are invisible in the visible landscape. Archaeologists have often regarded this peninsula in the northwest of Skåne as a marginal area. It does in fact have certain unique characteristics which distinguish it from what we know from other parts of southern Sweden. These characteristics may reflect a factual prehistoric situation originating in the particular topography of the region.

The geomorphology of the peninsula is peculiar. *Kullaberget* itself, a gneiss rock, rises from the sea, and the adjoining hilly country blends into the level country in a manner evoking past times. Extremely flat areas lead to what was once a wide strait, then a swampy fenland which was drained as late as the mid-19th century. A single day's walk through various types of topography is enough to cross what used to be a post-glacial island.

This region (*Kullabygden*) is rich in Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age monuments. Unfortunately, only a fraction of them have been examined by archaeologists. For a great part of the archaeological material close datings have proved impossible, but the finds and monuments indicate that people have lived here since the Boreal period. An interesting phenomenon is the absence of megalithic tombs, while Bronze Age burial sites are richly represented. Of Iron Age settlements there are few traces; more numerous are the burial sites from that period. Hoard finds have been registered from both the Neolithic and the Bronze Ages, and there are a few rich hoards from the Viking Age.

Since the late 19th century archaeologists have been fascinated by this region. Knut Kjellmark conducted investigations *i.a.* in caves on Kullaberg itself (Kjellmark 1905). A few decades later Bengt Salomonsson continued the investigations, and was able to show that these caves were used during several distinct prehistoric periods (Salomonsson 1959). Oscar Lidén worked primarily in the parish of Jonstorp. His life's work, field surveys of large settlements, was of great importance to archaeological research. Mats P. Malmer continued the work in the Jonstorp area with his investigation of the RÄ settlement (Malmer 1969). Other important investigations in this area were those conducted in the early 1970s by the Central Board of National Antiquities (Löfgren 1991). Further sites, discovered by interested amateur archaeologists and through the revised inventory of ancient monuments undertaken by the Central Board of National Antiquities, have opened new perspectives on the region.

In 1954 Carl-Axel Althin published the investigations and inventories that formed the

groundwork for the study of Stone Age chronology and settlements even outside this region (Althin 1954). A number of Bronze Age tumuli were investigated by *e.g.* Carl Gyllenstierna (the fidei-commissioner of Krappertup), by Oscar Montelius, and recently by the Historical Museum of Lund University and the Board of National Antiquities.

Over the millennia the geomorphological features in the peninsula have undergone considerable changes. Kullaberg was an arctic island when the ice-age cap had receded from Denmark and the Kattegat. The topography of the area then changed, following the elevation of the land and the rising sea-level. In the Mesolithic period the peninsula was a much larger expanse of land than it is today. In the Late Mesolithic the higher ground was once more turned into an island, separated from the mainland by a wide strait which would grow narrower and more shallow only in the later part of the Iron Age. This waterway may still have been navigable to shallow-draft boats during the Viking Age.

As the topography of the country was transformed so was the climate, the vegetation, and the fauna. The arctic tundra was replaced by forest, and gradually people arrived to clear and till patches in the forest. The ecologic and economic conditions of this varied landscape are likely to have been very favourable. Fishing must have been a stable resource, as it has always been in recorded time. There was of course good land for plowing and pasture. Our interpretations of peoples' lives must be founded on the varied ecological character of the landscape, and on our ideas of what people may have done in the landscape. How, then, did people react to these changes? How did they confront them? How did they, in the various periods of time, perceive yon high hill that rose steeply from the sea? How did man and landscape relate to each other in the long-term historical perspective?

The Rambler

Thus, the location of this transformed landscape, and the bountiful geographic setting, give rise to reflections about the lives people led. Since I do not believe that people of past ages can be



Fig. 2. Kullaberg

understood solely through environmental factors and rational causes, I am looking for other approaches.

I am an archaeologist, but also a rambler (*promenör*—I found this word in Lars Bäckström's poem (1992) "Promenören"). As I ramble through the countryside, the prehistoric landscape is both invisible and visible. As it was for the people of the past, this neighbourhood is also filled with associations to me.

It follows that I must make use of myself, and my own experiences. I set out, and the whole of Kullaberg is outlined against the horizon. I walk on paths well known to me, and slowly images of the people who lived here a long time ago begin to appear to me. I tell myself that even to me, who knows the landscape so well, it is an undeniably difficult and complex matter to dispatch my thoughts back in time. What particular period should I think of? As it happens, this is impossible to decide, and I am forced to admit that my associations are too untamed. I am a stranger, entering a no-man's-land. I think of how the children see their neighbourhood, and I try to find associations—from my own experience, of course. My rambling has begun.

Dominating its surroundings, Kullaberg has no doubt had many different uses. The rock itself, I

believe, must have played a crucial part throughout prehistory. It is a dramatic landscape; "the Arcady of the North" is what the writer Anders Österling called it. Distances are never great, but walking is in places, on the rock itself, quite strenuous because of the steep ascents and dangerous precipices. I think of all the climbers who over the years have fallen, of all the divers who have been carried away by the currents where the waters meet at the point of Kullen. People must have regarded the rock as dangerous in many ways. I think of the northwester, and of the impact the winds may have had. But could people long ago realize that the landscape was variable? Did they know about the inconstant coastline? Were there any stories about the archipelago that used to be here, long ago? And the caves? What did they do in them, and why do most of the finds date from the Stone Age and some from the Middle Ages? These caves are not really suitable for domestic uses. I would certainly not want to bring my children to the caves, or walk with them on the rock—at least not as long as they are small. I still recall the horror I felt when I shouted STOP!, a second before a precipice gaped in front of us.

My thoughts turn suddenly to all the wetlands that used to be. Great parts of the area were claimed for the plow in the mid-19th century, when much of the southern part of the peninsula was drained. The great common that Mårten Sjöbeck was able to de-

scribe from 18th-century maps reached from Allerum right up to Brunnby. In my belief it must have been important for pasturing livestock, perhaps even in the Neolithic Age. Perhaps there was, as Mats Regnell suggests, a sort of summer pasturing, with farmers driving their cattle from the wetland-meadows to the Björkeröd Plateau.

But what about the Pitted-Ware Culture—could it have been a continuation of the Ertebølle Culture? After all, there are no megalithic tombs, just the odd sacrificial find with a number of thin-butted axes. What about monumentality in this landscape containing only modest manmade monuments? Well, there are the Bronze Age tumuli, but not many, nor very impressive when compared with those of the Bjäre Peninsula across the Bay of Skälderviken. What does a landscape lacking in monuments tell us? Most people who write about the interpretation of landscapes speak of about all those monuments you can enter and stroll around in.

I believe the rock is what is significant. Our monument is the rock. The Kulla Peninsula is quite different from other areas. It has retained its distinctive character to the present day. Contacts along the eastern shore of the Kattegat may have been important. After all, there are hardly any archaeological finds until you get close to Helsingborg. But surely life in this beautiful country cannot have been just a struggle for survival. There is any number of beautiful things to discover—strange-looking hills, lookout points, the wide sea, the sunset. But I am no archaeoastronomer ...!

Then I am bombarded by a number of questions on contrasts in the landscape, and how these may have been perceived in prehistoric time, and then I am back home, writing these lines:

People live in a landscape, on a stage, which gives significance to their lives and offers them the opportunities they need. This landscape must have functioned as an active material category, it must have been integrated in peoples' lives and rational thinking. It may in itself have been a metaphoric reality, in the production and reproduction of things and thoughts.

But how do those finds, sacrificial centres, ancient field-systems, cupmarks, etc., which archaeologists describe and analyse, relate to significances and contexts overlying those objects and areas?

It is evident that spatial reorganisations have occurred several times on the peninsula. Fragments from various periods, with various func-

tions and significations, are stored in the landscape as in an archaeological archive. The landscape is an active element in the structuring of society, and this landscape must be given a population. My search for people in the distant past of Kullen is the relationship between form and substance, and currently my thoughts revolve around the words *Island and Rock*, or *Sea and Horizon*.

Conclusion

The variable landscape is created by nature and people under specific circumstances. Consequently, the landscape encompasses the past and the present in each period. It is a symbiosis between the past and the present. Diachronic studies of the utilization of the landscape provide us with an understanding of historical changes in which the landscape has an active and integrating part in peoples' lives.

I have been thinking in terms of temporality in which the rate of change over time varies for different phenomena. For instance, a particular burial tradition may exist over a longer period of time than relations of trade and change. Thinking about time in this way allows archaeologists to distinguish changes associated with different levels or aspects of society. I intend to use this sort of thinking in my study of the landscape as well. I wish to concentrate on the spatial restructuring of the landscape, by which I mean the economic and agrarian restructuring. In this way I hope to be able to interpret collective manifestations, for instance the erection of monuments, to study the meaning which the landscape held for people in different times in the past.

In other contexts I have been speculating on the so-called currents in the flow of time, which show how, using the resources of archaeology, we can distinguish changes relating to different levels or aspects of a society. It is my intention to use this sort of reasoning for landscape studies as well, bearing in mind the restructuring of the landscape and the reorganization of economy and agriculture, in order to interpret such united manifestations as the erection of monuments and also the significance of the landscape for

people in different periods.

In approaching the landscape with this attitude, and using these strategies, the researcher emphasizes that it is a functional and symbolic type of material culture, and that it must be provided with a population. I am convinced that by asking questions, mundane as well as existential, it is possible to gain a better knowledge of the various arenas where man has been active. These thoughts about the landscape as peoples' stage probably demand a certain measure of romanticism concerning the landscape.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Professor Björn Berglund for discussions concerning the Kulla Peninsula, Bengt Ellenberger who translated the manuscript and to Debbie Olausson and Helle Vandkilde who made helpful comments on the text.

References

- Althin, C.-A. 1954. *The Chronology of the Stone Age Settlement of Scania, Sweden*. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia 4:1. Lund.
- Barker, G. 1991. Two Italys, one valley: an Annaliste perspective. *The Annales School and Archaeology*. (ed. J. Bintliff). Leicester University Press.
- Barrett, J. 1994. *Fragments from antiquity : an archaeology of social life in Britain, 2900-1200 BC*. Oxford Blackwell
- Bender, B. (ed.). 1993. *Landscape. Politics and Perspective*. Oxford.
- Bradley, R. 1993. *Altering the Earth*. The 1992 Rhind Lectures. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series number 8.
- Bäckström, L. 1992. *Självporträtt och andra dikter*. Malmö.
- Carelli, P & Salminen, L. 1996. Borgen i bygden - ett bebyggelsehistoriskt projekt med borgen i centrum. *Bulletin för arkeologisk forskning i Syd-sverige* 4.
- Ferry, L. 1995. *The new ecological order*. Chicago Press
- Johansen, B. 1997. *Ormalur. Aspekter av tillvaro och landskap*. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 14. Stockholm.
- Kjellmark, K. 1905. Öfersikt af Sveriges stenålders-boplatser. *Ymer* 1904
- Lidén, O. 1938. *Sydsvensk stenålder belyst av fynden på boplatserna i Jonstorp*. Lund.
- Löfgren, A. 1991. Jonstorpsboplatserna. *Arkeologi i Sverige 1987*. Uppsala.
- Malmer, M. P. 1969. *Gropkeramiska boplatserna Jonstorp RÄ*. Antikvariskt Arkiv 36
- Regnell, M. 1988. *Stenåldersmänniskans vegetationspåverkan på Kullaberg, nordvästra Skåne. En paleoekologisk studie*. Examensarbete i geologi vid Lunds universitet. Kvartärgeologi nr 29.
- Salomonsson, B. 1959. Stenåldersundersökningar på Kullaberg. *Skånes hembygdsförenings årsbok*
- Schama, S. 1995. *Landscape and Memory*. Random House. New York.
- Sjöbeck, M. 1947. Allmanningen Kulla Fälad. *Kring Kärnan* III. Hälsingborgs Museums Publikation.
- Sporrong, U. 1993. Agrarian Landscapes in Sweden that are of particular scientific interest. *Bebyggelsehistorisk Tidskrift* Nr 26
- Tilley, Ch. 1994. *A Phenomenology of landscape. Places, paths and Monuments*. Berg Publishers. Oxford/Providence
- Österling, A. 1922. *De sju strängarna*. Stockholm