1 INTRODUCTION

This book seeks to examine property rights in Norway's Østlandet in the Iron Age.[1] When did property rights over land become a crucial part of social organization in Østlandet? Implicit within this question is a reciprocal possibility that land rights were organized without any form of territorial rights of ownership or even possession; I shall therefore also explore alternative forms of organized land rights in this region during the period from 500 BC to AD 1050. In order to shed light on these issues, I shall study the building practices and the settlement pattern with the benefit of the extensive and new settlement evidence that is the result of machine-stripping of areas in the past 30 years.

The background to this study is a desire to understand how, from c. AD 400, the lands of Hørdalsåsen in southern Vestfold came to be left unused after nine centuries of continuous cultivation. At a higher level, I want to explain breaks and continuity in agrarian settlement. Archaeological work of the past 20–30 years has shown that Hørdalsåsen is not unique. Areas of land are newly cultivated and left unused, and farmsteads built and abandoned, throughout the Iron Age, and Østlandet is in no way exceptional. This contrasts sharply with a long-standing view in Norwegian settlement archaeology which has very largely perceived the named farm as a stable unit with stable boundaries from the Roman Iron Age, if not even earlier, through to the present day. According to this research tradition, which I refer to as 'continuity scholarship', the establishment of farmsteads is explained through marginal agricultural lands being brought into use in periods when population pressure was high, while abandonment is reciprocally explained through their being deserted when the population level falls. The period in which Hørdalsåsen began to be farmed, however, the pre-Roman Iron Age, is not regarded as a period of high population pressure in Vestfold. It can also scarcely be right to describe land that was cultivated and manured for nine centuries as marginal. Hørdalsåsen and similar places thus conclusively refute the premiss which continuity scholarship has based itself upon. My aim, therefore, is to challenge continuity scholarship by investigating whether the functioning period of farmsteads and of land can be explained by means of the manner in which rights to land were organized.

This study is itself based upon a number of principles and premisses. Rights to the use of land are examined in this monograph as a set of rules that regulate relationships amongst people (Davis 1973:157; Hann 1998:5). Put another way, this means that I am looking for a social explanation (Shanks and Tilley 1987) of the deserted farms of the Iron Age. In a broad perspective, the studies of rights thus embrace the whole agrarian society.

At the level of individual farms, the settlement pattern as I perceive it can only be discussed on the basis of the primary settlement evidence, i.e. the buildings, and not through secondary evidence such as farm names, funerary monuments or later historical sources (Pilø 2005). A three-aisled building with earth-fast internal roof-bearing posts was the preferred house for farmers in Scandinavia throughout the Iron Age. From a modern functionalist perspective this type of structure has several drawbacks. I would emphasize in particular its short life-span. This could be as little as 25–50 years and can scarcely have been more than a century even if a few buildings may have survived even longer (Draiby 1991; Løken 2020; Zimmermann 1998:60–2; Ängeby 1999; Gerritsen 2003:39; Webley 2008:39–40; Herschend 2009:143; Diinhoff and Slinning 2013). The earth-fast posts suffered from damp, and rotted quite rapidly. I consider it fundamental that there was a reflexive relationship between the short-lived house and society (Gerritsen 2003). The building technology made it possible — in some cases desirable or even necessary — to move the settlements after one or just a few generations. Reciprocally, the repositioning of settlements caused the short-lived three-aisle houses to become the preferred building-type. Short-lived houses influenced and were influenced by property rights, agricultural systems, and probably also the world-view of their

1 Østlandet is the south-eastern quarter of Norway, comprising the historical provinces (from 1919, called *fylker*; previously *amter*) of Vestfold, Telemark, Østfold, Akershus, Buskerud, Hedmark and Oppland. In 2020, regional administration within this area was reorganized into three units: Vestfold og Telemark, Viken, and Innlandet. The Iron Age in Norway is defined as a period of prehistory that continued to and includes the Viking Period, and so ends in the 11th century AD, when the Middle Ages/(early) Medieval Period began.

residents. In other words, building technology linked social organization, economy and perhaps even systems of belief and cosmology (Bourdieu 1973; Lévi-Strauss 1983; Dobres 2000:96). Since (building) technology is "a medium for expressing, reaffirming, and contesting world views and social values" (Dobres 2000:100), it is essential to understand the technical aspects of Iron-age longhouses, which were the central institution in social life (Hastrup 1990; e.g. Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; Norr 1996; Gerritsen 2003:31; Webley 2008; Herschend 2009; Eriksen 2015). In consequence, I study *agency* as a collective, social movement, and treat the buildings as an effective mode of maintaining or promoting social organization (Dobres 2000:145; Ingold 2008).

I hope, then, to explain both change and continuity at micro- and macro-levels. At the macro-level, social continuity will be examined first and foremost through history and over long sequences. At the micro-level, continuity will be examined first and foremost through the functioning periods of individual buildings and sites. By distinguishing between continuity at these two different levels it becomes possible to show how persistent structures such as the three-aisled house were able to serve as core institutions over many hundreds of years or as a 'central feature of the *longue durée*', while at the same time settlement at a micro-level can be seen as composed of shorter term solutions or 'conjunctions' (Le Roy Laudrie 1974; Braudel 1980; 1995; Jones 1995). Through the study of the primary source material for settlement — the buildings themselves — it is also possible to identify regional or landscape-related characteristics, alongside changes in building practice and settlement pattern over time. The analyses are, in other words, both synchronous and diachronic, and the material spans a wide range of time and space. This makes it possible to study both continuity and discontinuity, and makes the choice of scale for the analyses and interpretations crucial (Mathieu and Scott 2004; Wells 2004). Concurrently, the use of the primary evidence makes it possible to discover historically specific features in Iron-age society which cannot be examined by using retrogressive methods — i.e. by drawing inferences from historically evidenced situations back in time in order to shed light on obscurer contexts. In continuity scholarship, research is conducted upon named and cadastral farms known from more recent times,[2] as if they had remained unchanged from the Iron Age. At the social level, most emphasis is given to features of Iron-age society within which we might recognize ourselves and which can shed light upon our own age: for instance, the accumulation of plural estate holdings and state-formation. Continuity scholars have thus written a settlement history of the Iron Age in such a way that only those features which re-appear in historical sources are treated as significant.

This has the corollary that the cultural difference between Us and the Other is reduced or disappears in order that our own roots can be sought in prehistoric society. In consequence, Iron-age people lose their individuality and agency, and function solely as a representation or projection of ourselves. They become puppets in a sequence of development, and have no independent significance. In that sense, the people of the Iron Age are 'colonialized' (Svanberg 2003:19–20). The philosopher and educationalist Paulo Freire (2003:24, 30) has studied education as an instrument of colonialization. He points out that colonialization is characterized by an absence of dialogue, and compares it with necrophilia: the triumphant masters satisfy their desires but deny the life of the object. Freire's pointed formulation seems to me appropriate to a critique of continuity scholarship at the same time as it indicates how such problematic situations can be avoided. The historical specificity and individuality of Iron-age people — their lives — are taken from them when they are reduced to silent representatives of an inchoate version of our way of organizing ourselves socially. In such a situation dialogue becomes impossible, and only the desire of continuity scholarship to understand our own time can be met.

This study is an attempt to establish a dialogue with Iron-age people. My goal is for them to be treated as individuals, not only because dead people *ought* to be treated in that way, in my view, but also because this renders it possible to understand a society that may have different features from our own. I shall achieve this through a presentation of the foundations of continuity scholarship in Chapter 3 and shall then formulate an alternative understanding of Iron-age people as actively dealing and thinking individuals or agents with their own, particular, historical value (Freire 2003:24–30; Svanberg 2003:110–13; Holst 2014a).

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EVIDENCE AND TO BUILDING TERMINOLOGY

Our archaeological evidence is first and foremost buildings which represent the agrarian culture of the

2 A 'cadastral' or 'matriculated' farm is a property that has been included in a central property register.

Iron Age in Østlandet and the sites at which they were raised. In total, 311 probable or possible buildings from 107 sites have been analysed (Ch. 6). With a few exceptions these were uncovered in the course of machine stripping of formerly cultivated land undertaken as part of development projects (Ch. 2). This also means that it is primarily buildings that had earth-fast posts which have been examined. That produces a number of critical challenges, not least in connexion with a possible phasing-out of buildings with earth-fast posts and possible continuity to farmsteads still known today (Ch. 4). Sunken-feature buildings (SFBs), often referred to as *Grubenhäuser*, are not part of this study because they can be specialized functional structures and not necessarily components of the farmstead itself (Jørgensen 2002; Herschend 2020). But otherwise, all of the Iron-age buildings from the study area on which information was available on 1 January 2014 will be included.

A common way of characterizing the buildings is to start from the structure that supports the roof (Rosberg 2013). Buildings with earth-fast posts inside the building are usually referred to as 'two-' or 'three-aisled' according to whether the building is divided lengthways by these posts into two or three spaces or 'aisles' (Fig. 1.1). In a technical discussion, 'buildings with internal posts' can be a better term (Rosberg 2013). Supplementarily, the term 'one-aisled' is regularly used of buildings that have earth-fast roof-bearing posts in their walls but none inside the structure. Three-aisled buildings constitute the majority of the examples in this study and it is questionable whether there are any one-aisled structures. With their elongated plans, three-aisled buildings are often referred to as 'longhouses' by archaeologists, especially if they include both human residential space and animal stalls (Egeberg Hansen et al. 1991:19). It is assumed that such were the main houses of the farmstead (Carlie and Artursson 2005:164). Archaeologists thus define longhouses partly on the basis of the outer form and partly on the basis of functional use. I shall not use the term 'longhouse' extensively, and so shall avoid confusion with 'longhouse' as a term used in social anthropology of buildings with special and in most cases collective functions: in other words a different role from that which archaeology takes as definitive (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995).

There are also three-aisled buildings which had other primary functions than the combination of house and stalls. These are usually referred to as 'economic buildings'. It is often difficult to distinguish houses from economic buildings in the archaeological record in cases where specific functions — for instance as a smithy — cannot be linked to the building (Carlie and Artursson 2005:164). Interpretations of the spatial divisions of the multifunctional building and their role are based to a great extent on well-preserved examples in Jutland and northern Germany. With less well-preserved evidence it is harder to distinguish between economic

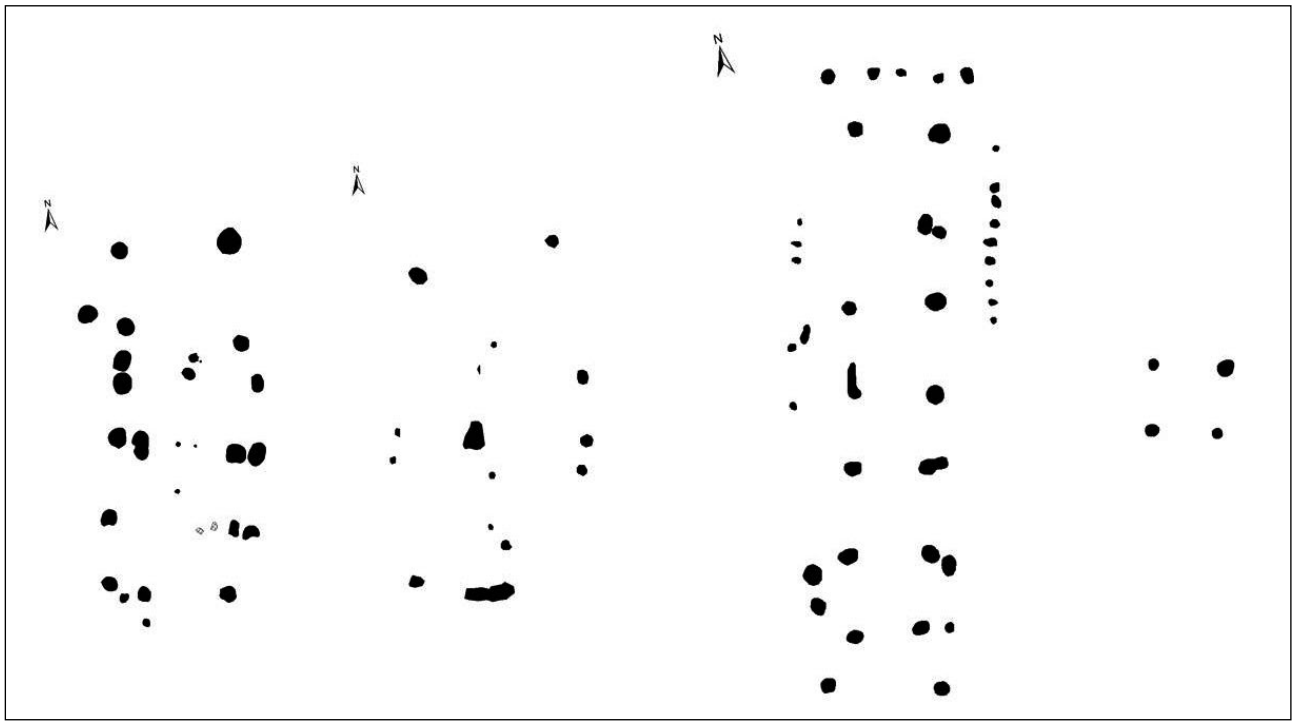


Figure 1.1 *From the left: examples of one-, two- and three-aisled buildings and a four-post structure. Drawn by Jan Kristian Hellan.*

buildings and residential houses plus stalls, while in some cases it is uncertain whether such a contrast ever was so clear in Sweden and Norway (Carlie 1999; Gjerpe 2008a). Here, the length of the three-aisled buildings is often used to distinguish the long buildings with both a house and stalls from the shorter economic buildings. A building with both human residential space and stalls at a farm with only a few animals may in fact be shorter than a large workshop building for specialized craft. Size alone, therefore, is not a good criterion for distinguishing the two categories of building. Often too, the position of a building 'moderately distant' from the principal farmhouse is used to identify economic buildings (Artursson 2005; Carlie and Artursson 2005). Some postulated economic buildings are nevertheless more easily identified, and it is often presumed that two-aisled buildings are economic buildings (Carlie and Artursson 2005:164). There is also general agreement that four-post structures are economic buildings (Løken 2020). These comprise four posts which together form a more or less rectangular or square shape. They rarely if ever have walls or fireplaces, and were probably sheds or the like used for storage (Zimmermann 1991; 1992). Because of the difficulties in distinguishing between houses and economic buildings in the Norwegian evidence, I shall not make great use of these terms (although see Løken 2020).

The terms that I shall use are also functionally based, but less dependent upon good conditions of preservation and detailed understanding of the function of the buildings. 'Building' is used as a general term for structures raised for the purpose of sheltering humans, animals, objects or anything else from the wind and weather (Hoff 1997:45–6). 'House' will be used of those buildings with walls and a roof which were more or less certainly used as housing or work spaces for people (Carlie and Artursson 2005:164): in other words, the majority of the buildings in this sample.

RANGE IN TIME AND SPACE

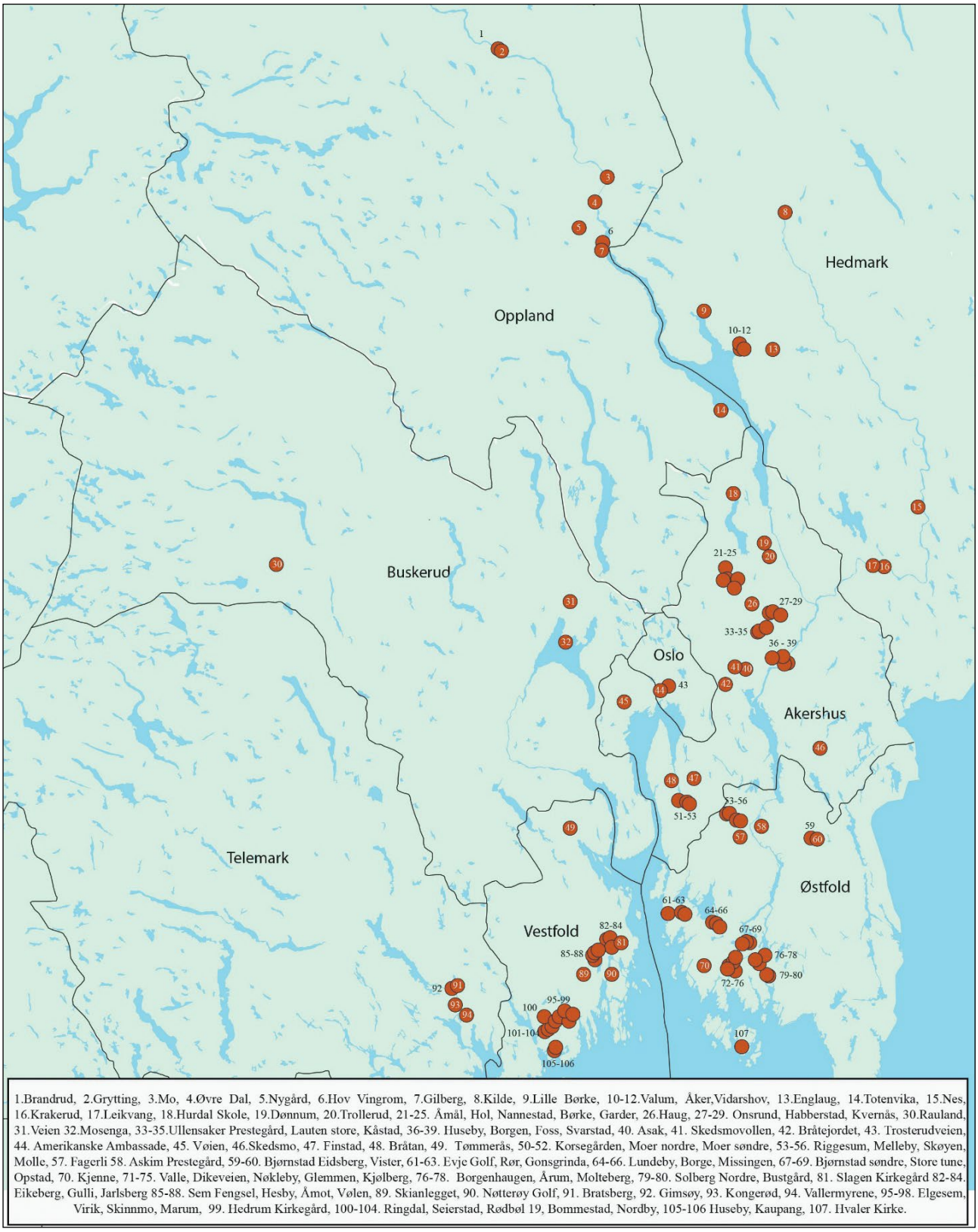
This book is concerned with the Iron Age in its entirety (500 BC — AD 1050). Geographically, the study is limited to Vestfold, Akershus, Oslo, Østfold, the lower part of Buskerud and the central agricultural areas of Hedmark, Oppland and Telemark (Fig. 1.2). This area is referred to as Østlandet. The cultivable land consists primarily of marine alluvium and sand, silt and clay, with patches of moraine. Within the study area, temperature, rainfall and topographical conditions were on the whole relatively consistent. Restricting the geographical range to an area with reasonably similar opportunities for agriculture in the Iron Age increases the likelihood of possibly variant solutions in respect of architecture, the organization of the farmstead or the settlement pattern being due to cultural decisions rather than simple adaptation to differing potentials in respect of farming.

Practically all of the buildings are dated in terms of calendar years by means of radiocarbon dating and calibration programmes. Concurrently, I make use of a relative-chronological framework in the discussion of buildings and social development. This creates some tension between absolute datings in calendar years derived from radiocarbon determinations and relative datings to archaeological periods that are almost entirely based upon artefact typology. There are some periods in which radiocarbon dating produces quite broad probability margins, and the calibration curve is relatively flat at the beginning of the pre-Roman Iron Age, at the end of the Roman Iron Age and in the Viking Period. Buildings can nevertheless be assigned to archaeological periods, and changes through time be identified. The source-related problems, datings and periodization are discussed in fuller detail in Chapter 4.4.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: HØRDALSÅSEN

The desire to understand how Hørdalsåsen was farmed between 500 BC and AD 400 and why the area was then abandoned is, as noted, the key motivation for this study. Thorough and detailed excavations combined with precisely targeted archaeometric analyses show complexity in origins, practices, change and abandonment that is difficult to explain without moving away from the distinctly Norwegian belief in continuity of settlement (Ch. 3). The limitations of the retrospective or retrogressive method are thus clearly revealed. The case of Hørdalsåsen is a crucial starting point for research into this question, while at the same time it provides for the reader an introduction to Iron-age agriculture in Vestfold that appears to be reasonably typical of the remainder of the area under examination. A summary overview of Hørdalsåsen is therefore presented already here in the introduction.

The site is located at the farm of Hørdalen in Sandefjord *kommune* (k., = administrative district) in Vestfold, and prior to the excavations this looked like a typical area of clearance cairns which stood at 5–10 m intervals (cf. Pedersen 1990; Holm 1995).



1.Brandrud, 2.Grytting, 3.Mo, 4.Øvre Dal, 5.Nygård, 6.Hov Vingrom, 7.Gilberg, 8.Kilde, 9.Lille Børke, 10-12.Valum, Åker,Vidarshov, 13.Englaug, 14.Totenvika, 15.Nes, 16.Krakerud, 17.Leikvang, 18.Hurdal Skole, 19.Dønnum, 20.Trollerud, 21-25. Åmål, Hol, Nannestad, Børke, Garder, 26.Haug, 27-29. Onsrund, Habberstad, Kvernås, 30.Rauland, 31.Veien 32.Mosenga, 33-35.Ullensaker Prestegård, Lauten store, Kåstad, 36-39. Huseby, Borgen, Foss, Svarstad, 40. Asak, 41. Skedsmovollen, 42. Bråtejordet, 43. Trosterudveien, 44. Amerikanske Ambassade, 45. Vøien, 46.Skedsmo, 47. Finstad, 48. Bråtan, 49. Tømmerås, 50-52. Korsegården, Moer nordre, Moer søndre, 53-56. Riggesum, Melleby, Skøyen, Molle, 57. Fagerli 58. Askim Prestegård, 59-60. Bjørnstad Eidsberg, Vister, 61-63. Evje Golf, Rør, Gonsgrinda, 64-66. Lundeby, Borge, Missingen, 67-69. Bjørnstad søndre, Store tune, Opstad, 70. Kjenne, 71-75. Valle, Dikeveien, Nøkleby, Glemmen, Kjølberg, 76-78. Borgenhaugen, Årum, Molteberg, 79-80. Solberg Nordre, Bustgård, 81. Slagen Kirkegård 82-84. Eikeberg, Gulli, Jarlsberg 85-88. Sem Fengsel, Hesby, Åmot, Vølen, 89. Skianlegget, 90. Nøtterøy Golf, 91. Bratsberg, 92. Gimsøy, 93. Kongerød, 94. Vallermyrene, 95-98. Elgesem, Virik, Skinnmo, Marum, 99. Hedrum Kirkegård, 100-104. Ringdal, Seierstad, Rødbøl 19, Bommestad, Nordby, 105-106 Huseby, Kaupang, 107. Hvaler Kirke.

Figure 1.2 *The study area and the 107 sites that are included in this study. Drawn by Elise Naumann.*

The area has been investigated in three campaigns. First, a thorough cultural geographical survey of the visible ancient monuments was undertaken (Höglin 1984); next, a number of the clearance cairns were excavated (Pedersen 1990); and, finally, a good 2,000 sq m were fully excavated and documented using the single-context method (Mjærum 2012a). Survey, recording and minor excavations were also carried out in advance of the final excavations (Iversen et al. 2007). The combination of undisturbed agricultural cultivation layers and very meticulous excavation with comprehensive archaeometric analyses has generated what is in Norwegian terms a unique insight into the conditions of agriculture in the Early Iron Age (Mjærum 2012b; Cannell 2013; Mikkelsen and Bartholin 2013; Svensson and Regnéll 2013; Viklund et al. 2013).

On Hørdalsåsen, traces of cultivation have been identified on the side of the ridge (= *åsen*) along with an associated droveway that runs to what is inferred to be a settlement area on the top. The settlement area has been identified with the help of minor trenches that have uncovered cooking pits and of phosphate mapping but has not been excavated. Alongside the settlement area there are also cairns which may be grave mounds. The vegetation on the area with cultivation evidence was cleared early in the first half of the pre-Roman Iron Age, probably around 400 BC. Immediately after that the area was cleared of stones measuring 0.1–0.4 m across, which were re-laid in rows of stone or clearance cairns. Both larger and smaller stones thus were left lying in the arable soil. Around half of the area appears as a single block of land. In the other half, the droveway, the clearance cairns and the stone rows separated unequal fields of 250–400 sq m along with some smaller areas that were not cultivated. The lane from the cultivation plots towards the settlement area on top of the ridge was in use from the beginning of cultivation. Stock farming was therefore integrated into the exploitation of the land from the beginning. The division between infield and outfield that is often dated to the Roman Iron Age (Myhre 2002:137–9) was thus established at Hørdalsåsen as early as 400 BC. Very early in the 1st century AD minor restructuring of the plots took place. It is also noteworthy that neither the plot-boundaries nor the lane were built up as traditional stone walls as is known, for instance, from the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period in Jæren (e.g. Petersen 1933). They consist rather of one or two courses of small stones and must have been reinforced with timber bars if they were to constrain animals. This was not due to the lack of suitable stone for construction: as noted, the area has plenty of stones. There is also no sign of any outer boundary to the infield or anything which might suggest property boundaries, such as have been noted from the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period in Agder, Jæren and parts of Vestlandet (Myhre 2002). Since material for stone walls was readily available, it is rational to infer that it was a cultural choice not to mark boundaries.

Archaeometric analyses have shown that the land for cultivation was manured to various degrees with settlement waste and dung, and perhaps also with soil or turf (Viklund et al. 2013). In the latest layers in particular, dung from domesticated animals was found, which points to an increase in manuring in the period immediately after the time of Christ, from around the same time as the field-divisions were restructured. At that time more stones were cleared as well, and those were deposited in smaller clearance cairns on the large, continuous surface. The comprehensive archaeometric analyses have, in combination with the thoroughness of the excavations, demonstrated that the cultivation areas were worked using a system of rotation involving fallow, pasture and re-wilding followed by clearance and a new round of cultivation (Mjærum 2012a; Cannell 2013; Mikkelsen and Bartholin 2013; Svensson and Regnéll 2013; Viklund et al. 2013). Around AD 400, arable farming came to an end and the area became pasture; but grazing also ceased within a few decades. Pollen analyses show that the area became pastureland once again in the Viking Period or early in the Middle Ages (Svensson and Regnéll 2013). Altogether this shows with full clarity that the transition between the Early and Late Iron Age can at least not be fully attributable to a decline in population caused by a volcanic eruption in the year 536 and years of famine that followed (see Gräslund 2007; Gräslund and Price 2012).

Nowadays, Hørdalsåsen is stony, dry, morainic land, but it is not implausible that the advantage of good drainage more than outweighed the undesirable risk of drying out, and that morainic land was regarded as good for cultivation in the Early Iron Age (Mjærum 2012b). The excavations and archaeometric analyses also show that the land was cultivated for nearly a thousand years, which can hardly have been the case had it been regarded as marginal in that period. It is worth noting that the soil was well manured, and still had high phosphate levels when it was excavated (Cannell 2013; Viklund et al. 2013). It is thus far from credible that it was abandoned because it was exhausted.

Table 1.1 *Variation in material culture, farm names and other sources for settlement at the farm that is now called Hørdalen*

Period	Material culture	Name	Other
400 f.Kr. – 500 e.Kr.	Droveway (Farmstead?)	?	Archaeometric analyses etc.
Vikingtid – 1700	?	Frøytveit	Written sources (pollen?)
1700 –	Farmstead etc.	Hørdalen	Written sources

Historical information on the farm's name is also relatively inconsistent with a direct development from the Early Iron Age to the modern named farm in the way that continuity scholarship posits. The name *Hørdalen* is from the 18th century; the farm was formerly called *Frøytveit* (Rygh 1967:264). The change of name took place at a time when documentary evidence indicates that the farm was in permanent use, but the reason for the change is unknown. The second element *-tveit* may refer to cleared land or pasture within woodland, and it came into use from the Late Iron Age onwards (Harsson 2002). The first element *Frøy* relates to the name of the god Freyr, and it has been proposed that before it was cleared, this area had ritual functions. As the generic *-tveit* is from the Late Iron Age and the farmstead that has been excavated is from the Early Iron Age, the area must have had a third name that is unknown to us (Karlsson-Lönn 1989; Vikstrand 2013). This is consistent with the fact that the modern settlement is in a completely different place from the Early Iron-age farmstead, and that the area which was under intensive cultivation in the Early Iron Age has not been ploughed since. We therefore have an anonymous farmstead of the Early Iron Age (Tab. 1.1), the farm name Frøytveit of the Late Iron Age or Middle Ages connected with an unknown farmstead, and the cadastral farm Hørdalen from the 18th century with a recorded name and a known farmstead (Mjærum 2012a; 2012b; Gjerpe 2013). On this basis, and contra the continuity position, I put two questions: can we assess the age of the farm of Hørdalen on the basis of archaeological finds of the Early Iron Age? And, secondly, can studies of the status and resources of the farm of Hørdalen shed light on the farmstead of the Early Iron Age?

The answer to both of these questions is 'no'. There was no farm Hørdalen in the Early Iron Age, and the only thing that the farmstead of the Early Iron Age and the cadastral farm Hørdalen have in common is coincidental collocation in geographical terms. The case of Hørdalen underlines the point that the farm and the nature of property have to be analysed on the basis of their own chronological conditions (Hagen 1953:11, 113). I shall therefore attempt to find an alternative to the retrogressive method, and shall include features which change or disappear along with stable elements, so that what is particular to the farms in temporal and spatial terms is revealed (Widgren 2000; Herschend 2009).

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND FOUNDATIONS

In scholarship in the Humanities, archaeology included, there is a long tradition of focusing intellectual endeavours first upon thinking about concepts and then using data to illustrate or to test the conclusions (Evans-Pritchard 1954:vii; Olsen 1997:92–94; Johnson 1999:38–40; Swedberg 2014:14–16). The background to my own research question, conversely, is finding myself in the position of having identified data that do not allow themselves to be explained or clarified by the conventional explanatory model (see e.g. Hansen 2015:30–31 for a similar situation in Danish settlement archaeology). This empirical observation may therefore indicate that the accepted explanation is not valid (Chalmers 1999:38–59; Popper 2002). In this study, it will be shown that Hørsdalsåsen is just one of many farms that cannot be explained in this way. The common rules of the game respected by the continuity scholars are thus challenged. To put it another way, what could be seen at Hørsdalsåsen could not be explained either by existing explanations or in some *ad hoc* way. In the light of Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of science (1962), one may say that the paradigm has been challenged, and that it is time to formulate new questions and to seek new answers. With this introductory account, I have attempted to offer a brief insight into my own hermeneutic cycle (Gadamer 1979) and concurrently to pave the way for my own theoretical position. The objective is not to argue either for or against the hypothetico-deductive method or induction. My understanding of continuity scholarship as a paradigm and my rejection of that paradigm (Gjerpe 2014) mean that I have to look for a new set of rules (Kuhn 1962; Chalmers 1999:94–7). My observation, therefore, can be regarded as a first step in what may be called 'abduction' or 'creative

theorizing': in other words, to look for a hypothesis or an explanation starting from some observed phenomenon (Swedberg 2014:29–51).

In my work as a field archaeologist, I have at times been searching for explanations of objects or features that neither I nor my colleagues knew any parallels to. I therefore agree with Richard Swedberg (2014:8) when he "argues that creative theorizing in social science has to begin with observation." The facts are, in consequence, not only that the research question of this study derives primarily from an observation made in the field but also that the theoretical framework and the methodology I use to solve the problem are inspired by personal experience in archaeological fieldwork. Even though it is my understanding that the research question being considered here has its foundation in an observation, I do not want to encourage naïve induction or empiricism or to ignore how observation is dependent upon theory (Olsen 1997; Chalmers 1999; Popper 2002). What I rather wish to emphasize is my belief that there is a prehistoric reality that is not contingent upon my own consciousness, and my unattainable ideal is to capture that reality. The presentation of my own background can also be understood as my attempt to approach Pierre Bourdieu's unreachable goal: to uncover my approach to what it is I am studying, and to liberate myself from unconscious norms, positions and assumptions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996:59–66). He recommends, in addition, that one should be explicit about which theories and authorities have provided inspiration and which one distances oneself from. The latter will be presented in the critical history of the concepts (Ch. 3) while the sources of inspiration are briefly presented in this chapter. As stated, I am critical of what I call continuity scholarship. This does not mean that I dispute continuity *per se* but that I am critical of continuity that is purely assumed and not supported or critically challenged, and of a concept of continuity that is barely defined or nuanced. As a result, it has been important for me to use a method that is equally well adapted to demonstrating breaks in settlement as continuity (Ch. 5).

Property and social praxis

Property rights over land differ from other types of property right for several reasons. Land is the most important element in production for an agricultural society. Land is also a finite resource: it is impossible to produce more land — in contrast to, for instance, domesticated animals, a second vital resource for an agricultural society. In theory it is possible to produce an infinite number of animals, although the figure is in fact limited precisely by access to land that can produce fodder or provide pasture. A property right is the right that one person or group has to control a specific piece of land. The right of control may be limited, or voided, through agreements and by others' rights, but as a general rule the property right gives the person who holds it the right to determine who is going to make use of the land, and on what conditions, and to keep other users out (Ch. 8). Property right also implies that a piece of land is delimited and has its own status. Even when the owner dies, it is not necessarily free for others to make use of this property, and the right of property, the property itself and the right to inherit are indissolubly intertwined (Chapter 8).

An understanding of property rights is important because they play their part in governing interpersonal relationships (Davis 1973:157; Hann 1998:5). The field of my research is therefore the values, norms, customs and attitudes, or *habitus*, which in turn are the starting point for interactions and praxis amongst Iron-age people (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996:106). As a result, the daily use of a farmstead and its land are understood as traditions anchored in social and cultural values and norms. I aim, in addition, to investigate whether the maintenance and abandonment of farms can also be understood as an aspect of habitus. Although not everybody founded farms or abandoned them, and presumably very few ever did that more than once, the procedures in certain situations may have been expected, and thus would have been included in the collective norms, values and customs of the society. I want to stress that I do not overlook the fact that external factors may have influenced social, economic or ideological structures, and with that the settlement pattern. At the same time, however, I am sceptical with regard to the settlement pattern being the product of some simple, economic response to such external changes, or changes in the size of the population, or the exhaustion of land. I also find it difficult to accept that agriculture was organized solely in order to maximize an economic surplus. Iron-age people were naturally able to make rational choices in order to achieve their objectives, and, just as self-evidently, they would have reacted to external events. However, their goals, means and reactions would have been culturally conditioned, founded upon their understanding of the world (Gerritsen 2003:7–8). I therefore study agricultural practice as social praxis and concurrently do not regard the farm exclusively as a

rational, economic enterprise (Bradley 2005; Bradley and Yates 2007).

By way of introduction, I have indicated that I wish to understand the interplay between people and material culture, and especially the reflexive relationship between material culture in the form of the built environment and the society's collective ideals and ideas, through looking at building practice and the buildings as effective elements of technology in a social sense (Warnier 2009; Chapter 1.4.2). A consequence of this is that social ideals and ideas are also part of the field of investigation. I regard Iron-age society as a foreign place (Lowenthal 1985; Solli 1996; 2002) and shall draw upon models and analogies that have not been widely made use of in Norwegian settlement research (but see Grønnesby 2019) such as Leo Webley, for instance (2008:125), has proposed. I also look upon the Iron-age economy as *embedded*, or anchored in, and constrained and governed by, non-economic institutions (Granovetter 1985; Hodges 1989; Skre 2012). In consequence, production, distribution and consumption of goods in short supply cannot be understood without an understanding of society as a whole. The distribution of burdens and rights must indeed rather be understood as political (Jenks 1902). Once again, it becomes clear that rights to land — an essential part of an agricultural economy — cannot be understood exclusively in a rationalist economic perspective.

Buildings as technology

The reflexive relationship between buildings that had short life-spans and the nature of property, the organization of agriculture, and in all probability the world-view of the residents, makes it fundamentally necessary to understand the technical aspects of the three-aisled building, the central institution of social life in the Iron Age (e.g. Hastrup 1990; Norr 1996; Skare 1999; Gerritsen 2003:31; Webley 2008; Herschend 2009; Eriksen 2019). I am therefore studying agency as a collective social movement (Dobres 2000:145). Agency can also be understood as a means of recognizing routines and activities as random, combined with a desire to refuse to comply with them (Bourdieu 1977:166; Smith 2001:158). Agency in this respect requires conscious application, but I regard the building as an instrument or a technology and not as an active element (Glørstad 2008; Ingold 2008). I shall also study both the presence and the absence of continuity (Gerritsen 2003).

With a focus on how a building influences its residents, the building can also be studied as an effective technology (Warnier 2009). The ability of living indoors is a technology that most of us master as a matter of course and rarely think about; what may be called the 'ability to dwell' is a feature of habitus (Bourdieu 1995). We do not keep meat on the sitting room table and do not light fires in cupboards; we dispose of rubbish quite regularly and do the washing up in the sink not in the toilet bowl. These behaviours are part of the *doxa*: routines or activities that are taken for granted and are so thoroughly regularized that they appear to lack intentionality (Bourdieu 1977:164–6). Much of this can be explained as functional. Fires in cupboards would be hard to control, and the building could burn down or the occupants be choked by smoke; meat attracts insects and becomes inedible after a few days, while bacteria from the toilet bowl can cause sickness. In other cases the functional aspect is less obvious, and the social is more prominent. Keeping hundreds of kilograms of paper indoors is fully in line with an elevated 'ability to dwell' if the paper is kept on hardwood shelves, is bound with leather, and the words 'Darwin' or 'Ibsen' are on the spines. It is less promising if the paper is unbound and the words on the spine are 'Fifty Shades of Grey', but the occupant is still to be considered as someone who knows how to dwell indoors. If the papers take the form of newspapers and hundreds of them are placed apparently haphazardly around the rooms, it is a marked breach of the doxa, and the occupant may be regarded as someone who lacks the ability to dwell: the person in question has not mastered the technique of living indoors. Different ways of keeping paper illustrate not only different ways of living, they also illustrate the difficulty of studying agency through material culture. Analyses of agency are not based upon knowledge of the context which an individual belongs to but on insights into the individual's intention (Smith 2001). To determine whether or not the newspapers on the floor are the result of a lack of ability to pick them up, the intention to use them as insulation or covering, or a desire to be different from the sort of people who have Ibsen on the bookshelf, is not a matter of simple observation. It is clear, meanwhile, that the residents of buildings in the Iron Age were endowed with the ability to dwell indoors (Norr 1996; Herschend 1997; 2009; Skare 1999; Webley 2008; Beck 2011; Eriksen 2019), and contrary to a functionalist viewpoint I would argue that the earth-fast and therefore rotting posts were an integral part of the technology, not merely a practical weakness. As a result there was no reason why skilled individuals of the Iron Age would either evade or

resolve the problem of rotting posts — it just was not regarded as a problem (cf. Dobres 2000:152).

"In many ways the household was a microcosmos, reflecting the larger order of cosmology and society at the only relevant 'local' level," wrote Kirsten Hastrup (1990:48). The investigation of what sort of society is reflected in the three-aisled building with earth-fast posts is a vital part of this research which will not be prejudged here.

A building technology that made it simple to adjust the length of the building (Gerritsen 2003:34–8, with refs.) is significant if there is a reflexive relationship between the life-cycle of the occupants and the length of the building. There are a number of different historical examples of buildings varying with the status and economy of the occupants — the buildings reflect the life-cycle of their residents, and the buildings have their own life which can itself be written in a biography (Gerritsen 2003:34–8, with refs.). The social biography of the buildings will not be studied in great detail in this work, simply because there is insufficient evidence to support it. All the same, it is crucial to keep it in mind that the buildings have lifeways which may have been broken at various points. These may have special consequences for the establishment of typological characteristics and for understanding the symbolic and social aspects of the building.

Although the three-aisled building was a constant and insistent presence in Scandinavia, it was not static. The technology changed through time, and different options were adopted in different parts of the study area (Chs. 6–7; and, e.g., Pilø 2005; Martens 2004; 2007; Bårdseth 2008; Gjerpe 2008a). I shall propose that these variations can throw light on to the interwoven and reflexive relationship between building technology, building practice, property relations, and social stratification. To put it another way, the heart of my thesis, the organization of rights to land and the creation or abandonment of fields and of farmsteads, can be researched by studying buildings as technology.

The 'farm'

The term 'farm' (Norw. *gård*) is used in this study of an agricultural settlement. The concept is commonly associated with present-day cadastral farmsteads or named farms, and in this light it can introduce preconceptions to the understanding of prehistoric settlement and agriculture. The term 'agrarian settlement' is often used as an alternative, especially by archaeologists who do not take it as a given that there was continuity in the farm's bounds (Østmo 1991; Burström 1995; Løken et al. 1996; Holm 2000; Myhre 2002; Pilø 2005; Gjerpe 2010). The equivalent Old Norse noun, *garðr*, had the original sense of enclosure or boundary, and it is generally supposed that the term emerged no later than the Early Iron Age even though that is hard to prove (Hovda 1981a). In the Late Iron Age the term also comprised the land along with the buildings that stood on the holding, as per the modern sense of 'farm' (Hovda 1981a). Although the term is ancient, it thus changed in sense between the Early and Late periods of the Iron Age. In this book, I nonetheless use the term 'farm' of an agricultural settlement, essentially because I do not want continuity scholarship alone to give the term its meaning. Another reason for using this term is that to do so impels reflections about agricultural settlement. In the Gulathing Law, the term *bær* is frequently used of the farming unit, while *garðr* is often used in its original sense, an enclosed area (Munch and Keyser 1846:128; Helle 2001:115 and refs.). Additionally, *bær* is also used in the Gulathing Law of an 'existing rural community', where the members' houses together constituted the *bær* in the sense of 'a cluster of buildings' (Munch and Keyser 1846:128). There are also examples in the Gulathing Law of two or even more people owning, working and dwelling at a farm with shared land, indicating that there was some form of collective rights. This use of the term may identify earlier features to which little attention has, as a rule, been paid. Commenting on Bjørn Myhre (1990:136), Per Sveaas Andersen has emphasized the possibility that *bær*/*býr* was used of 'the farm' in the Viking Period and earlier because the cognition of space was social rather than economic. Sveaas Andersen further suggests that the term 'farm' first gained the meaning it has nowadays in the Viking or early Medieval Period as a result of rigorous territorial divisions that took place only then (Myhre 1990:136). The word *bær* or *býr* is now found in many Scandinavian farm names as the second element in the form *-by* or *-bø*, and the original sense appears to have been 'homestead' (Hald 1981; Hovda 1981b). Place-names in *-býr* are also familiar in England and Wales, where they are used to identify Scandinavian settlement, or at least Scandinavian influence (Abrams and Parsons 2004). Conversely, there are diverse views on how that second ('generic') element should be interpreted: some specialists read it as very similar in sense to *garðr* while others take the view that its original sense may have 'to cultivate' or 'to prepare' (Vikstrand 2013:35–7 with refs.). Essential to this study is establishing clarity concerning land rights, and for that reason I take a

social rather than a territorial sense of the term 'farm' as fundamental.

The past as a foreign place — drawing upon analogies

"If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it must be a duck," is an observation sometimes attributed to Ronald Reagan (Cryer 2010:164). From similarities in behaviour and sound, he concludes that the object he is looking at shares other analogous features, and the logic is that two objects which share a certain number of characteristics are also similar to one another in other respects (Hodder 1982:16; Fahlander 2004). Analogy is the use of information taken from one context that we know or believe we know well, in archaeology often the present, in order to explain data from a situation we know less well, which in archaeology is usually prehistory (Johnson 1999:48). Analogies, therefore, are absolutely necessary to archaeology. The long, flat objects of iron or steel that are round at one end but otherwise have sharp edges are very similar to swords such as we know them from our own time, and for this reason we call them swords even though they are several centuries if not a couple of millennia old. Those who use relational analogies attribute importance to the fact that the similarity between a known phenomenon and the unknown phenomenon which is the object of study is sufficiently great for comparison to be relevant, and attribute less importance to the differences. The specifically Norwegian variant of the retrogressive method combined with a belief in continuity can be seen as an example of the application of relational analogies (Ch. 3). The abandoned buildings, fences and lands of the Early Iron Age have many features in common with the farms of more recent periods, and archaeologists as a result first used this formal analogy to conclude that they represented farms of the Early Iron Age. Continuity scholars go on to use relational analogies to emphasize the similarity between the farms of historical periods and the Early Iron Age, and concurrently to under-communicate the differences. In this way, a relatively simple use of analogies turns into an interpretation of the community. At the same time, the continuity scholars expressed explicit opposition to the use of analogies from places and times other than the Scandinavian Iron Age and Norwegian Middle Ages or more recent times (Sandnes 2000:205). The more the similarities are between two situations, the greater the informative strength of the analogy (Johnson 1999:48). What the researcher treats as important, i.e. the similarities or the differences between two situations, is therefore critical to the use of analogies. As a result, it is not necessarily the type of analogy but just as much the researcher's viewpoint which governs the use of analogy. Both relational and formal analogies can be regarded as simple analogies: they are used for the purpose of transferring the understanding of one phenomenon to another, be that from contemporary to prehistoric swords or from 19th-century farms to Iron-age farms. Simple analogies thus do not involve any new understanding.

Continuity scholarship has not been able to explain the settlement pattern that has now been revealed by means of archaeological excavations. This can be due to the fact that those scholars have to a large degree derived their simple analogies from the farm as it is known on the basis of historical sources (Ch. 3), and in this way they filter their data through models so that prehistory itself is difficult to recognize and praxis gradually becomes more or less self-fulfilling (Fahlander 2004). In very recent years, features of prehistory which are radically different from the later agrarian society we know of through historical sources have been steadily revealed (Herschend 1998; 2009; Oma 2000; 2010; Skre 2008; 2012; Hedeager 2011; Sindbæk 2011; Holst 2014a). I do therefore consider it probable that "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (Hartley 1953:1). I shall consequently investigate whether alternative ways of organising rights and obligations linked to the use of land for agriculture serve better to explain the patterns discovered and described in Chapters 6 and 7. However, no archaeologist can imagine or describe a totally foreign or unknown prehistory (Johansen 1974; Solli 1996; 2002; Kyvik 2002). Conversely, it is entirely possible to combine information in unexpected or unconventional ways in such a way that something 'new' is produced (Fahlander 2004:203). In an attempt to understand the unknown, I use analogies or narratives as sources, irrespective of the context from which they derive (Fahander 2004; Johannesen 2004). By using complex analogies, which means a concatenation of analogies or analogies as something other than the simple comparison of two phenomena, new understanding can emerge (Swedberg 2014:82). In order to imagine something that does not exist but which may have existed — for example, an agricultural society in Scandinavia with no property boundaries — imagination is needed (Swedberg 2014:190–5). Jean-Paul Sartre (2004) introduced the concept of the *analogon* for objects which stimulate the imagination. My analogies are narratives concerning property relations which diverged fundamentally from what is

postulated by continuity scholarship. Many of them are taken from studies in social anthropology concerning places beyond Europe, although I shall also take inspiration from written sources concerned with Scandinavia and northern Europe (Ch. 8).

The farmstead as a site — with and without a history

Some of the farmsteads in Østlandet were constructed at places which had been used for a long time while others were apparently built at new locations (Gjerpe 2013). A site is also distinguished from the surrounding environment or its wider context through having *feelings* associated with it (Thomas 1996). Feelings can consequently convert any conceivable spatial point into a site (Gussow 1971:27; Smith 1987). "What had been worst was finding the Place, nobody's Place but his; now the Days were filled with Work," wrote Knut Hamsum (1919:7) of his character Isak's founding of the farm of Sellanraa. Isak has looked at many "agreeable places" and finally finds an area with birds, game, good pastures, water and good arable land. From an economic point of view, therefore, the situation is suitable. But Isak isn't entirely convinced. "For two Days his Work is to explore the surrounding Area but he returns to the Shelter in the Evenings. He sleeps at Night on a Bed of Straw, he has become so at home here, he has a Bed of Straw below a Crag" (Hamsun 1919:7). Thus it is ultimately Isak's feelings rather than a rational, economic assessment that determine the choice of site. This situation could have close parallels in the Iron Age (Nyqvist 2001:221). Another new settler, Loðmundr, known from *Landnámabók* as one of the first to settle in Iceland, threw his high posts overboard in order to settle where they landed (Schei 1997:137–8). He chose, in other words, to let chance, fate or the gods decide, and did not make a judgment based upon economic and logical considerations. The stories of both Isak and Loðmundr are classic settlers' legends: they establish themselves in places with no history and no name. Isak's farm is given the name Sellanraa by chance when Isak makes a formal claim on the area. Hamsun's account is an analogon and not an analogy or a metaphor for my comprehension of the foundation of sites and farmsteads in the Iron Age. The account nevertheless beautifully illustrates — better than the story of Loðmundr — Alan Gussow's (1971:27) proposition that "Viewed simply as a life-support system, the earth is an environment. Viewed as a resource that sustains our humanity, the earth is a collection of places." These two narratives point to two problems that have to be dealt with when a farm is to be founded. The first is how to choose a site and the second is how to make the site one's own — or how to imbue a site with feelings. In line with my research question, I can also add: how to end the use of a site (Eriksen 2010; Amundsen and Fredriksen 2014).

Drawing inspiration from the social biography of things as a metaphor and the application of this line of thought to buildings and sites, I shall examine two different (settlement) sites' biographies (Kopytoff 1986; Gerritsen 1999; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Gerritsen 2003; Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Eriksen 2010; Amundsen and Fredriksen 2014; Bukkemoen 2015). The point of conception is the period at which the site was selected, and during the pregnancy the site moves from being a geographical point to being a site in human consciousness. The construction of the first house can be compared to the birth of the site as a social construct, a settlement or a farmstead. The life of the settlement site may be short or long, and in some cases of extended continuity it may appear as if the site has practically achieved eternal life. At the same time there are certain critical challenges in the evidence. Put concisely, this is a matter of how widely hypothetical settlement sites with continuity from the Iron Age to the present might be found (Ch. 4). In accordance with my wish to examine both discontinuation and continuity, I attach considerable significance to this challenge while I am investigating the death of the settlements and the possible return of the sites to life.

In my research into the biography of the site, the starting point is the lived life: in other words, geographical points that were first founded as a site and then built upon and so born as farmsteads. It can be difficult to link the various biographical phases to archaeological evidence. The choice of a site is particularly difficult — this will not necessarily have left any traces, but if a farmstead comes into being we know that it must have been conceived. We can certainly recognize sites that are well suited for settlement locations, but Isak's feeling that the site was *his* is something that it is hard to associate with material culture. The period of pregnancy, when Isak lies on his bed of straw and feels that the place is home, can be recognized through cooking pits, hearths, graves and other more or less manifest signs in the landscape. This does not mean that all cooking pits at sites without buildings are signs of failed pregnancies: not all points in the landscape were conceived of as settlement sites.

Perhaps the most important reason why the stories of Isak Sellanraa or Loðmundr the Old are not good analogies for the foundation of a farm in the Iron

Age is that both Isak and Loðmundr were placed within an unpopulated landscape with no history. The landscape is usually full of memories and expressions of identity; these are both formed and used in a social system (Nyqvist 2001). Sites and farmsteads are therefore more than geographical points: they are also physical expressions of social systems (Knapp and Ashmore 1999; Bukkemoen 2007; 2014). It also takes time to shape a landscape, and, just as society is continually formed and reformed, the landscape is not static (Snead and Preucel 1999:173). It will be formed and reformed at various levels or scales, and in this study I shall look at the landscape first and foremost at a broad scale in geographical terms (Lock and Molyneaux 2006) — that is, at the individual sites and farmsteads. All the same, my attention to regions and landscapes is essentially secondary.

History and legend comprise narratives of the time past that are relevant to the present (Kjeldstadli 1992:1–28; Steinsland 2005; Brink 2013). In a society that was effectively without a written language, the formation of the landscape must have played a major role in the establishment and transmission of history (Tuan 1974). Funerary monuments are expressions of one element of history in the Iron Age, often linked up in various ways to legitimize rights to land (Zachrisson 1994; Gansum 1996; 1997; Skre 1997a; 1998; Gansum and Østigård 1999; Gerritsen 2003; Thäte 2007; Lund 2009; Ødegaard 2010; Amundsen and Fredriksen 2014; Bukkemoen 2014). If the right to land can be legitimized by way of history, control of history is a means to power (Skre 1998; Nyqvist 2001; Svanberg 2003:11). The form and position of the funerary monuments in Østlandet vary chronologically and spatially (Hougen 1924; Løken 1974; 1987a; Gansum 1997; Solberg 2000; Forseth 2003; Stylegar and Norseng 2003; Stylegar 2004; Østmo 2009; Nordeide 2011). This means that the contents, the importance and even the motivation of the histories and legends vary. If ancestors are actively used to legitimize rights to land, changes in burial practice may reflect changes in these rights (Gerritsen 2003:145–50). Even though the landscape of Østlandet has a history covering the whole of the Iron Age, the contents and perhaps the importance of that history vary through time and space. Tradition, in the sense of formalized and ritual activities, is often used to establish continuity and contact with the past: we do what our ancestors did, and our actions are then accepted and commended by the ancestors. An example of such use of the past from the Iron Age is the lords' presentation of themselves as descendants of the gods in order to legitimize their pre-eminent role (Skre 1998). Tradition is, however, often created, and therefore much more recent than it purports to be; this false age is employed precisely in order to give the activities an appearance of authenticity and credibility (Hobsbawm 1992). In the same way, rituals can be used to change or cancel memories (Williams 2006:121). A tradition or a memory will have the same effect irrespective of whether it is artificial or genuine. Both tradition and newly created tradition say something about the society they belong to, but an invented tradition cannot be used to explore the distant past it claims to derive from.

In this study, therefore, I treat the landscape as a large number of sites with which feelings are connected, feelings that are often made material in the landscape. I also treat the presentation of tradition and history by Iron-age society as a political instrument rather than tentatively objective narratives of the past. Representations of the past can, as a result, be normative, and affected by what the past was supposed to have been like, rather than descriptive and based in how things were. It is important, consequently, to distinguish between tradition and created tradition.