



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Concluding remarks

Sherratt, A.G.

Citation

Sherratt, A. G. (1982). Concluding remarks. *Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia Xv : Prehistoric Settlement Patterns Around The Southern North Sea: Papers Presented At A Colloquium, Held In Honour Of Professor Dr. P.j.r. Modderman, Leiden, 3-7 May 1982*, 15, 181-183. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/27963>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/27963>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A.G. SHERRATT

Walking around the streets of Leiden during this conference, it is not surprising that the image which sticks in the mind is that of the bridge. Much of this meeting has been concerned with bridgebuilding, not only between different periods but also - more fundamentally - between the raw data of archaeology on the one hand and the stimulating but elusive idea of "settlement pattern" on the other.

It is no accident that the question of settlement patterns should be of prime concern to a group of archaeologists working in north-west Europe. It is a contribution of this area to European archaeology as a whole to have pioneered the extensive and often total excavation of settlement sites, to reveal the connections between houses, byres, granaries, boundaries, graves and fields. Undistracted by an excess of painted pottery, marble statues, or even Bandkeramik figurines, it has been possible to concentrate on revealing the structure of prehistoric occupation. The techniques pioneered by Professor Modderman and others have been profitably exported to areas where otherwise art-history would have first claim on the attention of archaeologists.

Even within our own area, however, there is an enormous diversity of landscapes. Some of the first bridges to build, therefore, are between our different traditions of field archaeology, based on the particular opportunities of local conditions. Questions posed in one area may be answered in another. Lack of one kind of evidence may intensify research on alternative ways of gaining this information, and lead to new advances of general value. Our differing emphases on phosphate analysis, coring, micro-wear, pollen studies, mapping techniques, etc. have been usefully compared and exchanged, as well as their results, at the "Information Market" during the meeting.

So too with ideas and interpretations. Danish colleagues (Brinch-Petersen, Madsen) have stressed the importance of seasonal rhythms in Mesolithic and Neolithic contexts. German contributors (Brandt, Zimmermann) have emphasised the specific functions of individual sites in the Iron Age - pasturing, cultivation, manufacturing. English and Dutch speakers (Cunliffe, Bakker) have looked at the regularities with which hillforts and megalithic tombs are spread across the landscape. There is tremendous scope here for crossfertilisation, in looking for these patterns in material that has not so far been approached from these points of view. Simple techniques like site catchment analysis have already become a common way of looking at very different types of archaeological site, and some well-known settlements have been illuminated by putting them in an immediate geographical context (Harsema).

One common thread among geographically diverse contributions has been the emphasis on landscapes rather than individual sites (Lüning, Pryor, van Regteren Altena). Here we meet problems that are specific to the *archaeological* study of settlements patterns: problems not encountered by geographers working with more recent material. One is the question of sampling - how we may most efficiently retrieve information on a scale large enough to make sense of it. This was much discussed over refreshments at the meeting, but deserves more explicit debate at future gatherings. Another problem is that of differential preservation. Archaeological visibility may simply reflect the process of site-destruction, and the most rewarding sites may still be covered by protective alluvium. We need to publish much more "control information" about the site-preservation and the circumstances of discovery, in order to understand our distribution maps. Blank areas may repre-

sent either "lack of information" or a genuine "negative observation", and we need to be able to distinguish the two. Thirdly, our comparisons would be helped if we had a common convention for describing settlement grouping between the levels of the site and the *Siedlungskammer*. Our discussions of Bandkeramik sites (Bakels, Constantin, Lüning) showed the importance of groups of sites, lying close to one another and perhaps forming a community for certain purposes. We need to describe and compare these structures, and perhaps invent specific terms for

forms of settlement which have no analogies in later (eg Medieval) settlement morphology.

Finally, one conclusion arose without debate from our meeting. These questions are best pursued in comfortable surroundings and congenial company. Whatever conclusions we may have reached about prehistoric settlement, we were unanimous in our agreement over the clear evidence of planning and forethought which was manifested in this tribute to Professor Modderman.

