A completely normal practice: the emergence of selective metalwork deposition in Denmark, north-west Germany, and the Netherlands between 2350-1500 BC

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10

‘Non-burial-gifts’: placing things in the landscape

This last concluding chapter focuses on one last aspect of the human actions that we are studying: the selection of landscape locations for metalwork depositions. As shown in the previous chapters, people *did* specific things over and over again, and these actions took place in specific *locations*. The landscape is one of the key elements in the practice of selective metalwork deposition that is archaeologically visible, and that therefore can be investigated. The patterns studied in the previous chapters show that people did not simply deposit metal objects in *any* place. They systematically selected specific places in the landscape for metalwork deposition, like bogs, rivers, or dry land settings (Vandkilde 1996, Fontijn 2002, 2019). This shows that there were conventions behind this practice. This chapter attempts to reconstruct these conventions, and explores the significance of the landscape in the practice of selective metalwork deposition.

But before focusing on these conventions, the category of ‘landscape depositions’ needs to be considered for a moment. What does this category actually entail? People systematically chose to deposit metal objects in specific places; it is clear that objects were *supposed* to be deposited in specific types of places, and not in others (cf. Fontijn 2019:29-33). The landscape thus played a vital role in the practice under study. But people also chose to bury the dead in specific places in the landscape: burial mounds were for example not constructed anywhere, but in carefully selected, specific locations (Bourgeois 2013). As discussed in Chapter 9, a small proportion of the graves in these burial mounds contained metal. One could thus state that in both cases, metalwork was placed in specific places in the landscape; in both cases, the landscape played an important role.

However, when people chose to deposit metalwork in natural places like bogs, rivers, or dry land settings, they deliberately chose to deposit these objects *away* from a body, a person – away from an individual. This is the crucial difference between burials on the one hand and hoards and single finds on the other. From the Single Grave culture on, it is thought that objects that were used as burial gifts in single burials were associated with the individual, used to express ideas of personhood (Fontijn 2002:59, Treherne 1995:106-113, cf. Vandkilde 1996:261, 267, see Chapter 3). This idea is discussed at length in Chapter 9. A metal object that was placed in a grave with a deceased thus had a close link with a person, but an object deposited in – for example – a bog very clearly did *not* have this association. This choice was very deliberately and systematically made. An object that was used as a burial gift was deliberately given to the deceased, while an object that was deposited in

a bog was deliberately *not* given to the deceased. Instead, it was given to the *landscape*. Therefore, I use the term 'non-burial-gifts' for the latter category for the moment, even though this is a somewhat awkward term. It describes something by stating what it is *not*, which is not quite intellectually satisfying. In the four data-based chapters, the term 'deposit' is used for this category of finds, in order to distinguish them from burial gifts.

A dichotomy can thus be observed in terms of the selection of locations for metal objects that people had used: they were either given to a deceased *individual*, or given to the *landscape*. This dichotomy can already be observed at the start of the investigated time period. In fact, it can already be observed in the Early Neolithic Funnelbeaker Culture, as we have seen in Chapter 3. Therefore, these two categories of depositions are a priori discussed separately, as is also explained in Chapter 2. The previous data-based chapters indeed repeatedly demonstrated that people made different choices concerning which objects they buried with the dead, and which objects they chose to deposit in the landscape. The first category is discussed in detail in the previous chapter, which dealt with the role of metalwork in the burial ritual (Chapter 9). The current chapter specifically focuses on the latter category of 'non-burial-gifts'.

Yet it should be noted that there is a category of depositions that complicates this dichotomy somewhat: in some of the sub periods, we have seen that people deliberately chose to deposit metal objects nearby or even inside burials, but without actually placing them in a grave with a deceased. This happened in particular in LN I, when copper flat axes were frequently deposited near burial mounds (Vandkilde 1996:179-180, see Chapter 3), and in period IA, when hoards were deposited relatively frequently near burials, like the Tinsdahl and Torsted hoards (Schindler 1960:221-224, Becker 1964:115-116, see Chapter 5). Although people chose to deposit these metal objects in association with burials, they were not used as burial gifts for the deceased. Following the definitions discussed above, these depositions belong to the 'non-burial-gifts' category. This chapter takes a closer look at them later on.

Within the group of 'non-burial-gifts', two different find categories can be distinguished: hoards and single object deposits. These are problematic categories, as shown in the previous chapters. They have been frequently debated, and there is no consensus on how to deal with them in research on depositions. Single finds are often not included, because they are believed to be disturbed hoards or burial finds (Autenrieth & Visser 2019). However, the patterns investigated in the previous chapters demonstrate that burials, hoards, and single object deposits *were* in fact different types of depositional events, as is argued in Chapters 7 and 8. People made different choices for these events, for example in terms of the selection of objects with a local or foreign shape. Local axes were predominantly deposited singly throughout the investigated time period, while objects with foreign shapes were specifically chosen either for burials or for hoards, depending on the sub period (see Chapter 8). Hoards and single object deposits thus do in fact represent different types of human actions, as both of these categories show patterns of their own (cf. Autenrieth & Visser 2019). The same conclusion was reached for the finds from Denmark by Vandkilde (1996:36). The categories 'hoard' and 'single object deposit' – although they might be somewhat problematic – are thus in fact meaningful, and are therefore employed in this chapter.

But there is more variation in the category of 'non-burial-gifts': metal objects were not only either deposited singly or in hoards, but also in a variety of landscape contexts. As

already mentioned several times in this introduction, they were for example deposited in bogs, in rivers, or in dry land settings. Overall, deposition was the 'right ending' for these objects, but it also mattered *where* they were deposited. For some objects, the right ending was to be deposited singly, while for others, the right ending was to be deposited in a hoard. And for some objects, the right ending was to be deposited in a bog, while for others, the right ending was to be deposited in a dry landscape setting. This is where the objects' *cultural biographies* (Kopytoff 1986) come into play again. This concept is discussed in detail in Chapter 8, so it is not repeated here. But it is clear that within the group of objects that were supposed to be deposited as 'non-burial-gifts', there is a differentiation; people differentiated between them.

However, categories like 'wetland depositions', 'bog depositions', and 'dry land depositions' are problematic. It is difficult or perhaps even impossible to catch the enormous variation and nuance that is observable in the landscape in a number of rigid categories (cf. Fontijn 2019:140). The category 'bog deposition' serves as an example to illustrate this issue. A bog is not a fixed, clearly outlined natural phenomenon: some parts of it are more waterlogged than others, some parts might be passable by people while others are not, and the vegetation varies. By categorising an object as a 'bog deposition', all this variation is ignored. Where exactly in the bog did people choose to deposit the object in question? In the most waterlogged, unpassable part? Or in a somewhat drier, passable part? At the edge of the bog or right in the middle of it? Unfortunately, such questions are impossible to answer for the vast majority of the finds. It is in most cases impossible to determine the *exact* landscape setting of the finds we are dealing with. Many of them actually come from entirely unknown contexts, so the information that an object is a bog find is in fact very valuable. Therefore, despite their problematics, these landscape categories are used and applied throughout this research, in order to use as much of the available information as possible, as is also briefly explained in Chapter 2.

Nevertheless, in a few fascinating cases, we *do* know more about the exact landscape setting of a find. A spectacular example is the landscape at Boest in central Jutland, where multiple hoards were deposited in LN II and period IA, and where a palisade and a burial mound were constructed (Rassmann et al. 2015). The palisade, which dates to period IA, consists of five rows of wooden posts, and points in one direction towards a boggy area, and in the other towards a hill on which a burial mound used to be located that is no longer visible today (Rassmann et al. 2015:37-39, see Figure 10.1). Two or three hoards were deposited inside the palisade: the famous hoard consisting of five exceptionally large axes dating to period IA, which was deposited in a pit lined with grass next to one of the posts; a hoard consisting of gold rings and flint objects, which has an uncertain dating; and possibly a third hoard containing two axes (Rassmann et al. 2015). Furthermore, another period IA hoard consisting of axes and spearheads was deposited in a dry context ca. 100 m north-east of the location of the palisade (Rassmann et al. 2015, Vandkilde 1996 no. 894), and an earlier hoard containing gold *Noppenringe* was deposited in a boggy context ca. 1 km north of the location of the palisade in LN II (Vandkilde 1996 no. 608). There are additional burial mounds in the vicinity of the site (Fund og Fortidsminder). These hoards and the landscape at Boest are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The landscape around Boest provides a fascinating glimpse of the depositional events that took place at the site. Imagine the rows of posts, stretching through the landscape for metres and metres, thereby creating an avenue, a *route*, with burial mounds in the

Figure 10.1. Excavation of the palisade at Boest in June 2016, carried out by Museum Midtjylland with assistance of the Economies of Destruction team. Photo: Marieke Visser.

background, and people moving along this route and depositing five exceptionally large axes in a carefully dug, grass-lined pit inside the palisade, perhaps knowing about other depositional events that had taken place in that same landscape. But moreover, this example also demonstrates that people did not always choose *unmarked, natural* places for depositions. Quite the contrary: instead of depositing metal objects in for example a bog, people chose to deposit metalwork in a landscape with burial mounds, inside a very visible row of posts that must have clearly marked the location. While a bog is a rather ambiguous place – as discussed above, it entails a great deal of landscape variation in itself – a man-made palisade stretching through the landscape is a very *concrete* place (cf. Fontijn 2019:140-142). And Boest is not the only example of metalwork depositions in such a place. There are other examples of hoards which were deposited along routes through the landscape, such as the later Bronze Age hoards which were deposited along the route to or from the Bourtanger Moor in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands (Fontijn 2019:142). And in the time period under investigation, there are several examples of hoards that were deposited in association with man-made structures, as discussed in the previous chapters. This phenomenon and what it entails is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Lastly, before moving on to examine the conventions behind the selection of landscape settings, it is necessary to point out once more that this research does not focus on such categorisations and subsequent interpretations as wet-ritual and dry-profane, as was already discussed in Chapter 1. Instead, the focus lies on the patterns in the data, which reflect hundreds, or even thousands of human actions behind which there was not

necessarily one single, specific motive. Instead, there were clearly widely shared ideas behind this practice, as demonstrated by finds from a vast area. There were widely shared ideas on what was considered the right place and the right object for depositions, *i.e.* how objects were *supposed* to be treated, and these ideas are what this research focuses on. This chapter specifically focuses on what was deemed 'the right place'.

The next sections first take a brief look at the conventions behind the selection of landscape settings for hoards and single finds and how they developed over time. After this brief overview, I focus on two main themes: firstly, on the differences between hoards and single object deposits, and secondly, specifically on depositions of hoards in the four sub periods and what they signify, starting with LN II.

10.1 The selection of landscape settings: an overview

We will start by examining the selection of landscape settings for hoards and single finds in the four sub periods from a bird's-eye view. This selection is shown in Figure 10.2. When we take a closer look at this graph, a number of patterns and developments stand out. Overall, the majority of the objects recorded in the database come from wet landscape settings: when we only consider the categories 'wet', 'dry', and 'dry/structural association', 74.4% of the datable metal objects come in fact from wet contexts. It is clear that people systematically preferred wetland settings when they deposited metalwork. However, when we examine the four individual sub periods individually, this is not the case for all of them. In LN I, metalwork was relatively often deposited in dry contexts, whereas in period IB, the vast majority of depositions, both hoards and single object deposits, come from wet contexts (see Figure 10.2). When we examine depositions from a long-term perspective, a trend towards a focus on wetland depositions can thus be observed. Nevertheless, this is not a continuous development from LN I onwards, and there are differences between hoards and single finds in terms of the selection of landscape settings in the various sub periods. These are examined more closely.

Starting with LN I, hoards were relatively often deposited in dry contexts in association with man-made structures. These are predominantly burial mounds. Compared to the later periods, single objects were also relatively frequently deposited near man-made structures, but more often in wet contexts than hoards.

In LN II, this pattern changes. In this period, people deposited the vast majority of metal objects in wetland contexts, and this applies both to hoards and single object deposits, although a small number of hoards was *not* deposited in wetland settings. These are discussed in more detail below. But of the single finds with known find context, 100% in fact come from wet landscape contexts! This number is heavily influenced by axes, which were predominantly deposited singly in wet landscape contexts, as discussed in Chapter 8. The preference for wetland settings was very strong in this period.

However, in the subsequent period IA, the situation is somewhat similar to LN I again. The preference for wetland settings is not as strong as in LN II. Hoards were remarkably often deposited in dry contexts with a structural association, while single finds were more often deposited in wetland settings. This is, again, influenced by axes, which were mostly deposited singly in wet contexts, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 8.

Lastly, in period IB, both hoards and single object deposits were predominantly deposited in wetland settings. Depositions near man-made structures are rare in this period.

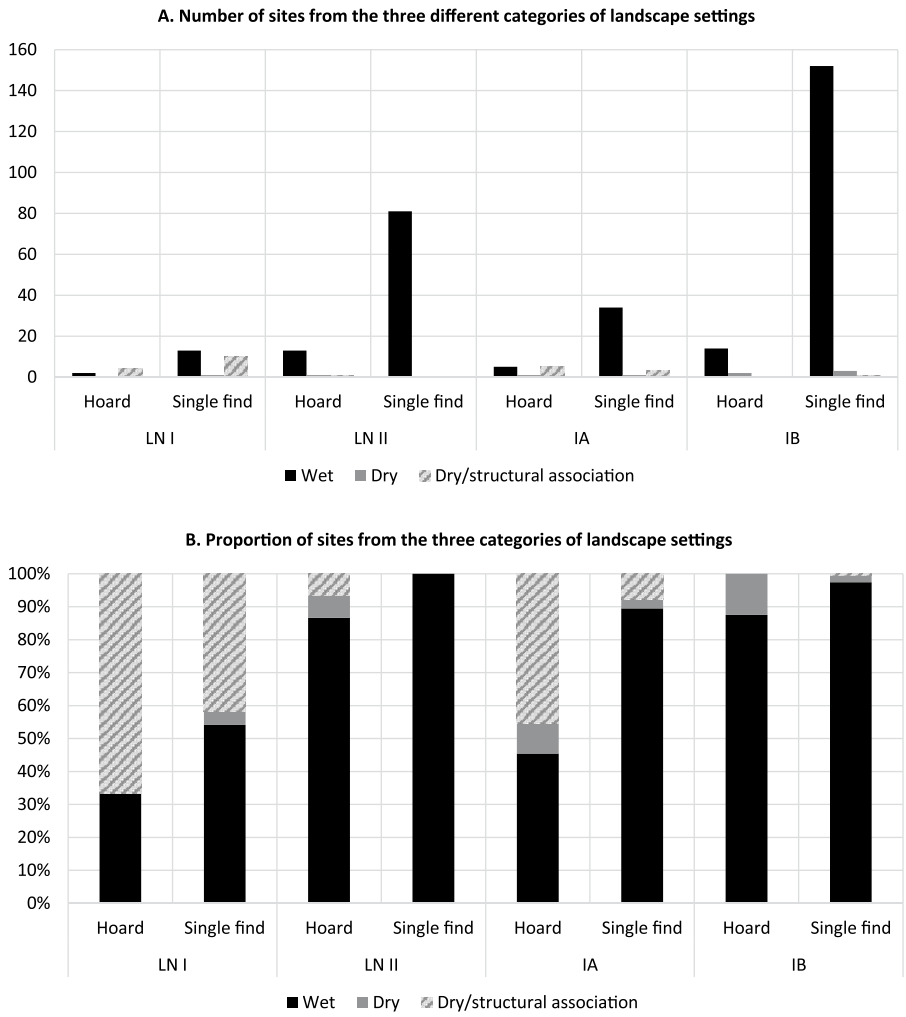

Figure 10.2. The selection of landscape settings for hoards and single finds in the four sub periods. Finds from the context categories 'unknown' and 'wet/dry' are not included. A. the number of sites from the three different categories of landscape settings. B. the proportion of sites from the three different categories of landscape settings.

The patterns in Figure 10.2 clearly show that people made different choices when they selected landscape settings for depositions of hoards and single objects. Particularly in LN I and period IA, hoards were deposited in different types of landscape settings than single object deposits: they were relatively often deposited near man-made structures. This striking association is discussed in more detail in the next sections. These patterns once again show that burials and hoards are different types of depositional events that should be seen as separate actions. Single finds and hoards are thus not simply the same type of action, merely different in terms of the number of objects that people deposited. Quite the opposite, as demonstrated by Figure 10.2 and Figure 8.5. Both hoards and single finds are thus equally important elements in the practice of selective metalwork deposition.

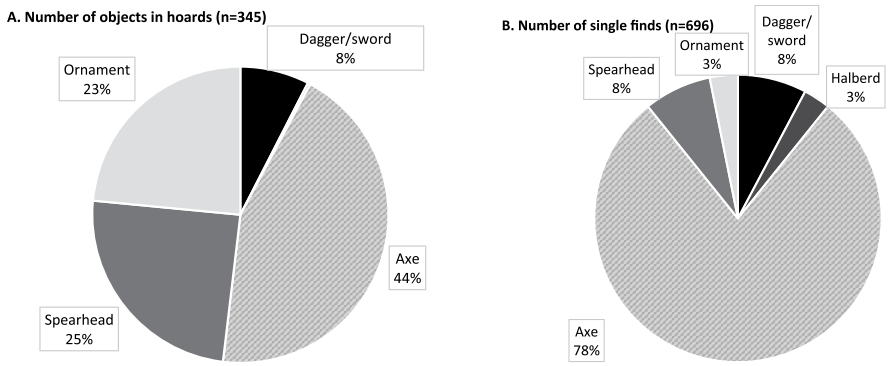

Figure 10.3. The proportion of the different object categories in hoards (A) and single finds (B) in the entire investigated time period.

After this brief overview of the selection of landscape settings for depositions over time, I now focus on the differences between hoards and single object deposits.

10.2 Hoards vs. single object deposits

Hoards and single object deposits, which both belong to the category of 'non-burial-gifts', were thus different types of depositional events. This suggests that these two types of events had a different significance or meaning. Therefore, these two types of depositional events need to be examined in more detail, and this is the focus of this section. The ratio between hoards and single finds fluctuates in the four sub periods (see Figure 10.2).

As shown in Figure 10.2, single object deposits are by far the most common type of depositional event in all four sub periods. The general practice throughout the 850 years investigated in this research was clearly to deposit metal objects singly in specific places in the landscape. Depositing a hoard was therefore by definition a special, unusual event: people deliberately chose to deviate from the general practice of single object deposits when they deposited hoards. Figure 10.3 shows which objects people chose for depositions of hoards and single objects. The selection of objects for depositions is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Here, it suffices to observe that axes constitute the majority (78%) of all single finds over time, while the hoard category presents a more varied object distribution. It is clear that people selected different objects for depositions of hoards and single objects. Overall, the majority of the single object deposits took place in wet landscape settings, as shown earlier in this chapter (see Figure 10.2). In contrast, hoards were deposited in different types of landscape contexts, especially in LN I and period IA, when they were relatively often deposited in dry contexts near man-made structures.

To sum up the differences between hoards and single object deposits: the vast majority of the metal objects were deposited singly in unmarked, natural, watery places, and this particularly applies to axes. In contrast, hoards were only occasionally deposited, people chose different types of objects for these depositional events (see also Chapter 8), and they also selected different landscape settings, including landscapes with man-made structures.

The general practice in the time periods under study was thus to deposit an axe singly in a wet landscape context (see Figure 10.4). Throughout the research area, people carried out this particular type of depositional act numerous times. These singly deposited axes

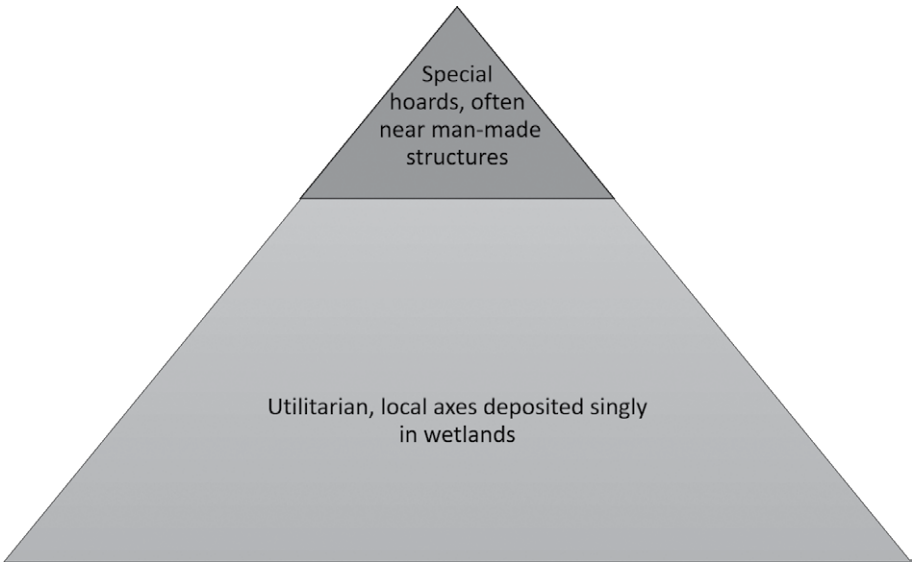

Figure 10.4. Visualisation of depositional events in the category 'non-burial-gifts' in LN II and period IA. Depositions of single axes in wetlands constitute the vast majority. Hoards were only occasionally deposited, so these must have constituted special depositional events.

were mostly utilitarian axes, tools that people used in their day-to-day activities, and they usually had a local shape, as shown in Chapter 8. This was thus the general cultural biography (Kopytoff 1986) of an axe: it was made in the local style, used as a tool in people's daily activities, and deposited singly in a wetland (see also Chapter 8). However, occasionally, people chose to deviate from this established practice. In a small number of special events, people chose to deposit multiple objects together in a hoard, objects that often had a foreign shape, as discussed in the previous chapters (see Figure 10.4). These rare depositional events must have stood out, and must have been memorable occasions. Therefore, the next sections focus on depositions of hoards, and explore what they signify. The following section starts in LN II, after which the subsequent sub periods are addressed.

10.3 Hoards in LN II: international contacts and the community

The majority of the hoards from Late Neolithic II (LN II) can be seen as multiplications of single axe depositions in wetlands: they mainly consist of multiple axes, and they were frequently deposited in wetland contexts. These hoards thus essentially follow the same conventions as the single object deposits from this period, except in multiplication (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion). Examples of such 'conventional' hoards are the Danish Hjadstrup and Værslev hoards (Vandkilde 1996, no. 136 and no. 201): both contain two local axes, and both come from wet landscape contexts.

But alongside these hoards, there is a small group of unconventional hoards that do not follow these conventions. They contain remarkable object combinations, as is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 8. These hoards – including the Danish Skeldal, Gallemose, and Vigerslev hoards, the Dutch Wageningen hoard, and the south Swedish Pile hoard –

contain combinations of metal objects that were otherwise never combined, combining local shapes with foreign shapes from various regions, including the Únětice region and the Anglo-Irish region. The term "*Mappa Mundi* hoards" was introduced for these hoards in Chapter 4, using Fontijn's term (Fontijn 2019:37): they appear to represent a "map of the world" as it was known to people in the local communities we are studying. They also serve as 'connector hoards', connecting otherwise separated object categories – axes, halberds, and daggers – as is visualised using network analysis in Chapter 4. Furthermore, these hoards embody the exchange networks existing at the time, supplying the region with metal, as well as the various stages in the metalworking process (cf. Vandkilde 2017:143, see Chapter 8). As discussed in Chapters 4 and 9, these hoards are truly 'connective' and 'international' in character: people showed that they were part of supra-regional, 'international' networks by depositing these hoards in this particular way.

Focusing on their landscape settings, these hoards were *not* deposited in unmarked, watery, natural places, like the majority of the deposited objects in this period. Quite the opposite: these hoards were deposited near man-made structures such as burial mounds and/or settlements, in close association with human activity. One of them, the south Swedish Pile hoard, was deposited in a central location where metal supplies are thought to have arrived and metalworking activities were carried out (Vandkilde 2017:157). Since they are so unconventional, and people deliberately chose to deviate from the general practice of wetland depositions of single axes, depositing such a hoard must have been a memorable event. Because of the high visibility at the location of the Pile hoard, it has been argued that its deposition may in fact have been a *public* event (Vandkilde 2017:165). The same might perhaps apply to some of the other unconventional hoards (see Chapter 4). In a similar vein, Bradley has suggested that river depositions may have been public events (Bradley 1990:138).

Needham argues that such depositional events were probably known to and meant for the whole community, and therefore he uses the term "community deposits" (Needham 1988:246), as discussed in Chapter 4. People deliberately did *not* deposit these hoards in ambiguous natural places like bogs, far removed from human activity, but in the midst of the world they lived in, in very concrete, clearly man-made settings (cf. Fontijn 2019:135-150). These depositional events were special, memorable public events, meant to leave an impression on the audience (see also Chapter 9 for a discussion on the impression that burials were meant to make on the audience). The *communal* aspect of these hoards is indeed striking.

Summing up, these unconventional LN II hoards embody the supra-regional networks that the local communities we are studying were taking part in, and they were deposited in landscapes on which people had clearly left their mark, in the midst of the familiar world that people lived in. These depositional events were probably public events, and probably known to a wider group than the local community. These hoards appear to connect regions, communities, practices, and people (see also Chapter 4).

10.4 Hoards in period IA: regional practices and the community

Moving on to period IA of the Nordic Bronze Age, some hoards were deposited in wetland settings in this period, following the general conventions behind depositions. But again, a group of hoards stand out because people chose to deposit them in very different types of contexts: they were deposited in dry contexts in association with man-made features (see Figure 10.2). This is in particular a Danish pattern, but a few cases are also known from

northern Germany. The contexts of these hoards are discussed in more detail. As already discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, there was a gap in metalwork deposition in the Netherlands in this period, so this part of the research area is not included in this discussion.

Two or three hoards were deposited inside or near the palisade at Boest in central Jutland in period IA, as discussed in this chapter's introduction (Rassmann et al. 2015, and see Chapter 5). Burial mounds and additional LN II and period IA hoards are also located in the vicinity of the palisade. Furthermore, two hoards, Tinsdahl (northern Germany) and Torsted (Jutland), were both deposited in a container inside a man-made stone structure in a landscape with Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds and flat graves (Tinsdahl: Schindler 1960:221-225, Torsted: Becker 1964:115-117). These stone structures are themselves remarkably similar to burials (cf. Melheim & Horn 2014:10). Lastly, a hoard in northern Germany is thought to have been deposited inside a burial mound (Klein-Wesenberg, Hachmann 1957 no. 194). In short, these hoards were again thus *not* deposited in unmarked, natural places, far removed from human activity. Instead, people chose to deposit them in close association with man-made features, or even in burial-like settings. Again, there is a striking *communal* aspect to these hoards, which reminds us of the LN II hoards discussed above.

The landscape at Boest (see Figure 10.1) provides a fascinating insight in the practice of selective metalwork deposition, and it is – to my knowledge – a unique context (cf. Rassmann et al. 2015). The palisade consisting of multiple rows of wooden posts, the burial mounds, the Bronze Age hoards, and the Late Neolithic hoards that had already been deposited in the wider area earlier make it a landscape of special significance. Furthermore, the area around Boest was a central location where various transport and communication routes intersected in prehistory (Rassmann et al. 2015:28). This reminds us of the central locations of the LN II hoards discussed above. As discussed above, the palisade itself constitutes a route that stretches through the landscape. The exact meaning and function of the palisade and its connection with the surrounding structures at Boest are as yet unclear (Rasmann et al. 2015). Parallels of similar palisades are known from Sweden, the Netherlands and northern Germany, but so far, no other palisade has yielded depositions of metalwork (Rassmann et al. 2015:37-39). A similar palisade from period II in Hüsby (northern Germany), directed towards a burial mound, has been interpreted in broad terms as a cultic monument (Freudenberg 2012: 631, 634). The public, widely visible and impressive setting of these depositional events is striking.

Turning to the contents of period IA hoards, these were clearly local in character. This is also addressed in the previous chapters. In Denmark, period IA hoards contain 'normal' object categories; particularly local, utilitarian axes and spearheads. In this respect, they are different from the LN II hoards discussed above, which contain exotic and foreign shapes. These might be the first signs of the emergence of the Nordic Bronze Age, which had its true breakthrough in period IB (Vandkilde 2014ab, see also Chapter 9). But these 'normal' objects occur in exaggerated, repeated numbers, like in the Torsted hoard, which contains seven axes and 40 spearheads, or in exaggerated sizes, like in the hoard with five aggrandised axes deposited at Boest. Such Überausstattungen ('over-equipments') in Hansen's terms (2001) are *not* found in burials in this region and period (cf. Hansen 2001:160). Furthermore, spearheads were almost exclusively deposited in hoards in period IA, always in multiples, and never in burials (see Chapter 5 and Figure 8.1). So in terms of their contents, these hoards clearly belong to the 'non-burial-gifts' category of depositions.

The repetition of spearheads in the Torsted hoard has been interpreted as representing a group of warriors (Melheim & Horn 2014:17). Spearheads themselves thus appear to be associated with the *group*. Again, these hoards have a *communal* aspect.

In northern Germany, however, spearheads are rare in hoards. Instead, hoards in this region often include ornaments and *Ösenringe* from the Únětice region, as discussed in Chapter 5. Hoards were thus primarily deposited following Únětice practices in this region. In addition, axes which are thought to have local shapes also occur in these hoards. While the Danish hoards thus emphasise local practices and elements, the north German hoards instead combine Únětice and local elements.

Summing up, in contrast to the LN II hoards discussed in the previous section, which embody ideas of 'internationality', the Danish hoards thus emphasise local practices: they contain repetitions of common objects made in the local style. These series of objects might be associated with a group of people, particularly in the case of multiple spearhead depositions. These hoards were deposited in close association with man-made structures, in some cases in central locations in the landscape. There is a distinct *communal* aspect to these hoards.

10.5 Hoards in period IB: shared ideas and regional interpretations

Lastly, in period IB of the Nordic Bronze Age, a remarkably small number of hoards was deposited, considering the enormous amount of metalwork that was deposited in this period (see Figure 10.2). Single object deposits were still the most common type of depositional event, but metalwork became abundant in burials now, as discussed in Chapter 9. In contrast, hoards with metalwork were scarce. The few hoards that *were* deposited in this period therefore perhaps stood out even more as depositional events.

Hoards were almost exclusively deposited in wetland settings, which applies to metalwork depositions on the whole in this period. People thus chose not to deposit hoards in different types of landscape settings than single objects, like they did in previous periods. Irrespective of how many objects people deposited, they clearly preferred to deposit them in wet landscape contexts.

Turning to the contents of period IB hoards, the most common elements are axes, spearheads, and swords, as discussed in Chapter 6. These objects are predominantly made in the local style, and are thought to have been utilitarian (see Chapter 6). They were mostly deposited in one-type hoards, which consist of either multiple axes, spearheads, or swords. But in a small number of hoards, people chose to combine these three object categories together. The contents of these mixed hoards, including the Danish Valsømagle I and II hoards, the German Oldersbek hoard, and the Dutch Overloon hoard, are remarkably similar (see Figure 6.13), despite the fact that they are widely dispersed across the research area, as shown in Chapter 6. They all combine axes, spearheads, and swords, although in varying numbers and of varying shapes and types, and remarkably, all of them contain two spearheads, one of which is decorated and one undecorated. In addition, the Valsømagle I hoard contains a fish hook, and the Overloon hoard a dress pin. These hoards are thus quite restricted in terms of their contents, in contrast to contemporary burials, in which a great deal of variation can be observed, as discussed in Chapter 9. Apparently, there was a supra-regionally shared idea that this was 'the right way' to deposit the bronze weapons that existed at the time.

But although these hoards appear to reflect a shared idea, this idea was in fact expressed in regional material terms. The two Valsømagle hoards belong to the Valsømagle regional group in eastern Denmark, which has its own characteristic material culture, including metal-hilted Valsømagle swords, Valsømagle shaft hole axes and Valsømagle spearheads, which occur in these two hoards (Vandkilde 1996 nos. 511, 676). The Oldersbek and Overloon hoards belong to the Sögel-Wohlde regional group in south-western Jutland and northern Germany, which also has its own characteristic material culture, including organic-hilted Sögel-Wohlde swords/daggers, nick-flanged axes, and Bagterp spearheads, which occur in these hoards (Vandkilde 1996:121, 230, Butler 1990:74-76). But when we zoom out, these hoards are clearly of the same structure. So an overarching, shared idea was expressed in regional, material terms in these hoards. These hoards thus appear to express both 'international' and 'regional' ideas; they appear to 'operate' on two levels. The overarching idea was internationally shared: the combination sword-axe-spearhead, deposited in a hoard. But the interpretation was regional: people used their 'own' local swords, axes, and spearheads to deposit in these hoards.

Summing up, depositions of multiple objects at the same time were remarkably rare in period IB. Instead, the focus shifted to burials. Hoards were deposited in wetland settings, just like single object depositions; in terms of the selection of landscape settings, nothing thus sets them apart from single object deposits in period IB, which was the case in LN II and period IA. They are remarkably similar across regions, reflecting widely shared ideas on how metalwork was supposed to be deposited at the time. However, people interpreted these shared ideas in regional material terms: they used objects in the regional style – *i.e.* either Valsømagle or Sögel-Wohlde objects – in these hoards. These hoards thus reflect and emphasise international ideas as well as local practices.

10.6 Conclusion

After examining 'deposits', or depositions of 'non-burial-gifts', in the investigated time period, it has become clear that people systematically selected specific metal objects to give to the landscape, instead of burying them with a dead individual. These objects were removed from society and from the association with one particular individual by depositing them in carefully selected landscape settings. Wet landscape settings overall play a vital role in the practice of selective metalwork deposition, a predominance that grew even stronger in period IB. The general practice was to deposit objects singly in wet landscape settings. This particularly applies to axes throughout the investigated time period. Depositing a single metal axe – an axe with a local shape, that had been used in everyday activities, as discussed in Chapter 8 – in a wet landscape setting was thus a common, conventional, 'normal' event that regularly took place.

But in a number of rare, special depositional events, people chose to deposit assemblages of objects together in hoards rather than singly. These special depositional events do not just deviate from the general practice in terms of the number of objects that were deposited. The selection of objects and landscape settings also deviated. In LN II and period IA, people selected different landscape settings for these special depositional events than for single object deposits: they deposited these hoards in association with man-made structures, in clearly marked places, rather than in unmarked, natural, ambiguous places like bogs. These hoards had a clear *communal* aspect, being tied to the community both in terms of their contents and their contexts. These depositions may have

been public events, taking place for the benefit of the community (cf. Needham 1988:246). These hoards either emphasised the supra-regional networks that the local communities were involved in (LN II) or the local communities themselves (in Denmark in period IA). Through these hoards, the communities we are studying expressed their views of their place in the world; in other words, these hoards reflect what the communities we are studying wanted to emphasise in terms of the world they lived in. In period IB, these two spheres come together: in this period, hoards are of a supra-regionally shared composition, reflecting shared ideas, but people chose to express these ideas in regional material terms, demonstrating that they belonged to the local community.

Nevertheless, the hoards in these three periods have in common that they were special, memorable events, intended to leave an impression on the audience. Through these depositional events, in which the landscape played a vital role, these communities expressed their views of the world they lived in and their place in it. These hoards are indeed *communal* in character: they were *community deposits* (cf. Needham 1988:246), in contrast to 'normal', regular depositions of single, local axes. Once again, it is obvious that selective metalwork deposition was first and foremost a *social* practice.