Over the last two decades, British prehistorians have created a distinctive social archaeology, and archaeological enquiry has increasingly focused on how people in the past perceived their world. Borrowing heavily from both anthropology (e.g., Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Ingold 1993) and social geography (e.g., Hägerstrand 1970; Pred 1981), there has been a move within prehistoric research toward more people-centered, experiential, and phenomenological approaches in which landscape exists as a medium created through narrative, inhabitation, taskscape, social memory, and sensory experience (e.g., see Thomas, this volume). Landscapes have been considered as a network of places, as a medium through which places were socially constructed and made meaningful.

Within early Neolithic studies there exists a strong interest in developing a landscape approach into which is incorporated studies of monuments and material culture (e.g., Barrett, Bradley, and Green 1991; Cleal and Pollard 2004). However, architecture has traditionally dominated studies of the period, and landscape is too frequently regarded as little more than a setting for monuments. Although the biography of a long barrow or causewayed enclosure site can be discussed in great detail, as an object this architecture has become situated very firmly in the landscape. When architecture is viewed as an object in this way, attention is focused on an overall orientation, shape, and final form. Such a perspective presumes a unilinear trajectory from design to end product. In due course, these architectures then provide another kind of setting for material culture, so by the time artifacts are incorporated into the study they can be understood only in terms of how they were deposited inside and/or around the built architectural object.

The latter approach has an evident nested quality to its working, with each object located inside the next like a series of Russian dolls: landscape, architecture, material culture (see Figure 31.1). Rather than confronting this question of spatial scale as integral to understanding and enquiry (see also Head, this volume), this approach instead fixes scale as archaeological accounts coalesce around the resultant objects (e.g., Barrett 1994a; Cummings and Whittle 2003; Thomas 1999; Tilley 1994, 2004). The problem with establishing and enforcing these scales at an analytical level is that the resultant rigid divisions cut across an understanding of the diverse scales at which people themselves operated. This is incommensurate with the lives that social archaeology is trying to investigate in the first place.

In asking whether division into three discrete scales of inquiry—landscape (large), architecture (medium), and material culture (small)—is the best or only relationship through which to approach articulating scales of working and how
things and people connected together in the past, this chapter proposes a new approach to thinking about this problem. Rather than treating each scalar level as separate, I look at how they intersect. I examine the notion of architectures as landscape in order to consider more directly how past people themselves concretized different levels of action.

**Questioning Located Objects**

Suggesting a more fluid approach to the question of changing scales is one thing; putting it into practice is another. For example, what do you make your point of departure if landscape is not to exist as a more or less regional container? One approach would be to consider archaeological sites as points along paths and not as central places in the landscape. For example, John Barrett has written that:

> The non-megalithic and megalithic long mounds and the causewayed enclosures did not lie at the centers of areas of land surface, but were instead places at the ends and at the beginnings of paths. These were the intersections of paths; places of meeting and departure which may have been part of a wider and seasonal cycle of movement. (Barrett 1994b: 93)

To expand this would mean that they are constituted not through their point of location in a landscape container but through a relational context of engagement with their surroundings. In this chapter, I take this idea a step farther, with the aim of destabilizing our existing (and rigid) scalar approaches by arguing that architectures as landscapes were made from fragments of distributed practice.

Central to this is an account of what I term *dispersed space*, a space made through a series of tasks that range from the making and using of flint tools, the setting of fires, the working of wood into posts, the cutting of quarry pits, the butchery of animals, and the ways in which these things were also entwined with “recognized” building materi-
here suggests that there should be no endpoint to what we perceive architecture or indeed landscape to be, because architecture extended outward and so was caught up in other parts of the landscape. Areas of flint working were needed for tools; areas of tree-fall and woodland clearance were needed for stakes; pathways and pasture were required for people to manage their herds; and so these features were also part of these distributed sites.

**Architecture as Distributed Practice**

What if architecture is not defined exclusively in terms of an object-like building that is then used but is truly considered as a medium for action? What of an architecture that exists through construction, through practices of making? Archaeologists have long been confused about how to explain the earliest recognized activities at long barrow sites, so these practices have often been termed “prebarrow” activities and then simply sidelined or ignored. I argue that one aspect to our study of these sites should focus on precisely these early practices and how they generated time gaps between events of construction, gaps that can shed crucial light on factors such as mobility and how people went about living their lives. This may be illustrated by the long-barrow site of Beckhampton Road in Wiltshire (Ashbee, Smith, and Evans 1979).

On a small chalky ridge of glacial drift deposits located in a gentle valley, long-standing grassland had been cut into and stakes erected. After the stakes had rotted, a large fire setting was created, over 4 meters in length and nearly 2 meters wide, which was then smothered by dumps of soil and turf (see Figure 31.2). Time was marked in evident ways at this site. There was, for example, grassland that became established over a long period.

**Figure 31.2** Plan showing “prebarrow” features and axial stakeline of Beckhampton Road, Wiltshire
of time, and then came the cutting down of wood into stakes, which was followed by a period when things were allowed to decay. The setting of a fire and the burning of wood, then the addition of soil and turf and the quick smothering of the flames followed this period of inactivity. Then there was another delay or gap in the record of the past at this place.

These time gaps were not simply fortuitous but were a central part of the architectural process. The generation of a time gap was also a part of “building” as an active practice. It would be wrong to understand the context in which these actions took place as simply a series of progressive activities that produced events in construction with gaps in between. As the architect Bernard Tschumi has put it, *both* event and disjunction are crucial parts of architecture (Tschumi 1996).

In architecture such disjunction implies that at no moment can any part become a synthesis or self-sufficient totality; each part leads to another, and every construction is off-balance, constituted by the traces of another construction. (Tschumi 1996: 212)

If gaps and disjunction are also a part of architecture, then building activities always have a disconnection and an elsewhere. To put this another way, the force of action goes out and on in the world, and in this way the space that emerges from the act of construction comes to be distributed (after Deleuze and Guattari 1992).

**Architectures as Landscape**

From the buried soil at the site of Beckhampton Road, land snail fauna suggest an initial cover of woodland that was cleared, giving rise to a grassland environment (Ashbee, Smith, and Evans 1979: 281). From the buried soil at the nearby site of South Street long barrow, there was evidence for woodland from tree-root casts and their land snail fauna. The pollen suggested a dominance of hazel, with oak, elm, birch, alder, and pine (ibid: 295). At Beckhampton Road, the stakes were driven through long-standing grassland, so the wood for the stakes was chopped down from trees elsewhere. There was then a temporal disconnection while these timbers decayed. Oak trees were chopped down, or tree-fall managed, and this wood was brought to the area and burned in a large fire setting. In tandem with these activities, but from elsewhere, soil or turf was quarried or of where these “off-site” tasks took place cannot be known; it is enough to know that the many tasks taking place here incorporated materials that were distanced spatially from the area of grassland or from one and other temporally.

This situation can be further complicated by thinking about the flint tools, such as axes, that would have been needed during any kind of subtle woodland management. Artifacts recovered from the buried soil of Beckhampton Road comprised only eight flake tools, but there was no evidence for axe manufacture or the management of such tools in the form of axe-sharpening flakes directly at the site. So woodland had been cleared at Beckhampton Road, and specific flint tools would have been required to do this, but although evidence for the working of flint can be found at nearby sites such as South Street (ibid: 270-72), it is not taking place at Beckhampton Road, and the only site where any part of axes was recovered was Windmill Hill, over 3 km away (Whittle, Pollard, and Grigson 1999: 331).

It is important to look again at the way time was marked at this site: this was not as clear succession of events but was instead interrupted by significant gaps and delays, which were then followed by practices of making. Early practices generated time gaps between events in construction, and so we need to consider what these conditions might be saying about mobility and how people went about living their lives. If people were living mobile lives at this time, as has been argued by Alasdair Whittle (1990) and Joshua Pollard (2005), then should not these various and noncontinuous activities be considered as a part of architecture?

Although the time gaps were not drawn out over as long a period at earlier Neolithic pit clusters, recent work on these sites provides a useful way of thinking about how to interpret the kinds of contexts in which these actions took place. From the pit cluster site of Kilverstone in Norfolk, parallel tempos to past lives have been noted, and a disjunction has been identified between them. For example, there was the relatively slow tempo and complex process of accumulation of different materials in the prepit context, with a period of delay, before the fast tempo of pits being cut and then immediately backfilled (Garrow, Beadsmoore, and Knight 2005: 13). Of the time gap between these parallel tempos, Garrow and colleagues write: “The picture we have of the site involves extended occupation overall. It has been argued that this occupation was repeated and persistent but not continuous” (ibid: 18). The gap marks the time when people were absent from
Earlier Neolithic sites in Britain include a high proportion of domesticates, and so we must be careful, as Richard Bradley has pointed out, not to conflate hunter-gatherer and pastoral ways of living just because they practice a mobile economy involving animals (Bradley 2003: 220). But we do have to consider the nature of the mobility of pastoralists and the kinds of architectures or spaces that they would have produced. What is clear from all of this is that if you consider architecture as practice rather than object, with disjunction as a vital part of that practice, then you are forced to take a different landscape approach, one created through points of departure and dispersal rather than emerging from a consideration of nested qualities of a location and staying put.

Let us return to Beckhampton Road, at the point where further stakes were erected obliquely across the smothered fire setting (see Figure 31.2). After the stakes had been set, turf was stacked on the other side of the wooden partition. A fleshed cattle skull was pinned within a matrix of chalk rubble, and then turves were stacked around it. Twenty meters northeast from here another fleshed cattle skull (with the cervical vertebrae still attached) was also incorporated into chalk rubble (see Figure 31.3). This time, connections were made quickly because the cattle skulls, which were hanging from stakes, were still articulated when they were incorporated into the rubble. In turn, the rubble and the stake line were pinned in place by stacks of turf.

On first consideration, what I have described would seem to be an intensely entwined assemblage of things that would have marked out this space as a specific place or location. Yet, I would argue that disjunction is still a part of practice, albeit of a different nature to the previous discontinuities outlined above. For example, between the cattle and the grassland there was now an accumulation of things that included a smothered fire setting, dumps of soil, and then chalk rubble. From spaces where their herds moved over established areas of grassland to dead cattle with hides and fleshed skulls hanging from stakes over scorched earth concealed by dump after dump of quarried rubble, people's perceptions were changed. Space had shifted because the quality of engagement people had with things had altered; put very simply, people were treating their cattle in a very different way and incorporating them into the building process—someone was holding the animal's carcass on a pole while another person put additional material on top of this. The effects that this shift in space would have had on people must not be ignored, because it made concrete the disconnection between the living animal and its body as architectural material. Chris Gosden has written of the effects of objects:

> An object with new or subversive qualities will send social relations off down a new path, not through any intention on the part of the object, but through its effects on the sets of social relations attached to various forms of sensory activity. (Gosden 2001: 165)

I now extend this way of thinking into further research that operates beyond the extent of one long barrow. By what means could it have been

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**Figure 31.3** Beckhampton Road, Wiltshire: Plan showing “prebarrow” and barrow features (Ashbee, Smith, and Evans 1979).
possible for fragments of distributed practice to matter at a larger landscape scale? There are several other long barrow sites in the region (Ashbee, Smith, and Evans 1979; Whittle 1994; Whittle, Rouse, and Evans 1993), as well as causewayed enclosure sites (e.g., Whittle et al. 1999) (see Figure 31.4). All these sites have evidence of earlier practices of making that have been termed “prebarrow” or “preenclosure” and to date largely ignored (although see Pollard 2005: 106–07 for a more integrated approach to earlier activities and “recognizable” architectural practices). Similarly, there are large numbers of flint scatters that have been recorded at the Wiltshire Sites and Monuments Record, and sites with evidence for occupation (Smith 1965a, 1965b; Smith and Simpson 1966; Whittle et al. 2000). The next step is to break down differences that exist between these data sets that have been created through general phasing and site typology, and then to start to connect various tasks across sites while simultaneously noting discontinuities of practice at the site level.

For example, pits were cut at the Millbarrow and Horslip long barrow sites, and at the site of Windmill Hill causewayed enclosure. At Millbarrow, pits 401 and 548 had fragments of human bone incorporated into their matrix (Whittle 1994: 18), and at Windmill Hill there was the exposure of a least one body in a pit (Whittle, Pollard, and Grigson 1999: 350–52). One of the most complicated and interconnected assemblages comes from the earlier practices of pit-cutting at the site of Horslip long barrow, where a group of nine pits formed an arc at the proximal end of the site. It is particularly interesting to note that material culture was involved in the constructional process only in the most connective areas, that is, where pits were cut or recut to physically connect other pits together. Material culture constituted a major component of the matrix of pits 2 and 7, where flint was knapped in situ when two pits were joined together through the cutting of a third pit (McFadyen 2006). Material culture was also involved in the act of connecting features together at Windmill Hill, where large quantities of material, including worked flint, chalk, and sarsen, came from pits 36, 37, 41, and 42 (Whittle, Pollard, and Grigson 1999: 352).

It is therefore possible to connect various tasks across sites, but I also want to draw attention to the
way space is created and how it is given dimension alongside these events. Evidence of site level “space making” takes the form of fragments of distributed practice, and spatial and temporal discontinuities. Rather than sites being seen solely as central places acting as foci for activity, they must instead be seen as constituted through discontinuities and connections, the latter made through practices extending elsewhere into other times. Therefore, only the disjunctions are impressed on the site (Tschumi 1996: 209). As archaeologists, we can and should attempt to trace the ways in which different kinds of practice intersect with other people and extend into additional activities across sites. The challenge is to develop an archaeological program that can trace exactly where and at what time specific connections were made.

**Conclusions**

In treating building and architecture not in landscapes but as elements of landscape engagement, my aim has been to demonstrate how attending to architecture as practice might be a useful way to engage with concepts of architecture beyond the particular and unified architectural object that has been the focus of previous archaeological accounts. I hope I have made clear that if you consider architecture as practice rather than object, with disjunction as a vital part of that practice, then you are forced to take a different landscape approach: an approach created through points of departure and dispersal rather than being about the nested quality of a location and staying put. There is evidence at the sites I have described for disjunctions impressed on the site (Tschumi 1996: 209). As archaeologists, we can and should attempt to trace the ways in which different kinds of practice intersect with other people and extend into additional activities across sites. The challenge is to develop an archaeological program that can trace exactly where and at what time specific connections were made.

Past people did not live their lives with their material culture in architecture in the landscape. Material culture, architecture, and landscape all intersected in the early Neolithic of Britain, and only through careful and attentive analysis of this will we start to understand the diverse scales at which past people operated.

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**References**


