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## Parallel Concepts of Space. An Archaeological Perspective

Communicated by Michael Meyer

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# Parallel Concepts of Space. An Archaeological Perspective

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At the same time identical space can be perceived, used and understood in different ways by varying actors. Based on exemplary examples the authors point out that these parallel conceptions of space can be identified with archaeological means. This plurality of concepts is a valuable level of understanding for the analysis of societal, religious, economic and political conditions and phenomena.

Space; social structure; economy; gender; archaeology; parallel concepts

Räume werden zur gleichen Zeit von verschiedenen Akteuren auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise wahrgenommen, genutzt und mit Bedeutung aufgeladen. Anhand ausgewählter Beispiele zeigt der Beitrag, dass diese parallel existierenden, auf den gleichen Raum bezogenen Raumkonzepte archäologisch identifiziert werden können und somit als zusätzliche Verständnisebene für die Analyse gesellschaftlicher, religiöser, ökonomischer und politischer Verhältnisse zur Verfügung stehen.

Raum; Sozialstruktur; Ökonomie; Gender; Archäologie; Parallelität

## Introduction

In the course of our work with theoretical concepts of space and their use and applicability in archaeology, we have become increasingly aware of the fundamental importance of the social constitution of space. The idea of *parallel concepts of space* refers to the contemporaneous use of space by various actors who conceptualize space in parallel to one another.<sup>1</sup> Space does not already somehow exist: it must first be produced by people, just as it then plays an important role in the constitution of the social. As Martina Löw has put it, “space is a relational arrangement of social goods and people (living beings) at places.”<sup>2</sup> Space and social practice belong together; they cannot be separated.

Since social practice is not homogeneous and rigid, but contradictory and dynamic, archaeology must be more attentive to the social structuring of space – and, consequently, the parallel use of space. Various social groups and classes are in competition in and around the space: women and men, old and young, masters and servants, natives and foreigners, faithful and agnostic. The diversity of the actors allows us to grasp the possibility of several spaces existing simultaneously at one place. This generates questions of concrete physical spaces as well as imaginary ones.

The nature of this subject through time and across continents was examined as part of Parallel Spatial Concepts (*Parallele Raumkonzepte*), the Topoi conference held in Berlin on 15–17 March 2010.<sup>3</sup> The various case studies presented at the conference demonstrate that dealing with parallel social phenomena through their placement in space permits a surprisingly differentiated look at early societies.

1 Hansen and Meyer 2013b.

2 Löw 2016, 188.

3 Hansen and Meyer 2013a.

Above all, it became clear that prehistoric archaeology, as well as historical archeologies, have been far too reflexive in assuming that societies are homogeneous and in viewing this as the norm.

## Parallelgesellschaften

In Germany, the term “parallel society” (*Parallelgesellschaft*) is currently considered a warning sign of a society that is collapsing under the influence of disparate legal concepts and value judgments. The Berlin *Tagesspiegel* newspaper, for example, used an anxious headline, “Do We Live in Parallel Societies?” to report on “Muslim magistrates” secretly negotiating financial settlements between perpetrators and victims: “Sealed-off Salafist cells in Berlin: Not all religious groups consider German law binding. How far should this go?”<sup>4</sup> And in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 5 November 2015, the German chancellor urged the swift integration of asylum seekers, cautioning that “parallel societies” were the antithesis of this goal.

What is it about these parallel societies? What concept of society is behind them? Their inverse, to many, is a unified society from which no one breaks rank: a society that acts, embodies, and considers itself homogeneous. The concept of the nation-state becomes manifest – the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, if we take this to the extreme – but also the basic idea of a dominant culture (*Leitkultur*).<sup>5</sup> On the other side, the parallelism of different social concepts, their juxtaposition, is experienced and described as a threat. The everyday nature of this parallelism goes unseen, along with its necessity for establishing identity and its enormous potential for promoting creative cooperation among unequals. In the subtext of these warnings against a parallel society lurks an outdated and boring societal concept, with dangerous consequences. The United States has traditionally done things differently: parallel societies, especially in terms of religion, are a matter of course in New York, even constitutionally protected,<sup>6</sup> but have come under heavy fire in the politics of the moment.

Space is the ideal frame of reference to identify and locate the parallelism and simultaneity of very different social and cultural phenomena, generating fruitful analytical results. Accordingly, this complexity of space is ideal-typically inherent in the so-called spatial turn. Henri Lefebvre’s “production of space”<sup>7</sup> conceives of the intersection and overlap of simultaneously existing spaces similarly to Löw’s “spacing” and “synthesis”: in *The Sociology of Space*, Löw argues that “the constitution of various spaces at one place must become conceivable.”<sup>8</sup> Doris Bachmann-Medick emphasizes the “overlaps resulting from the simultaneity of disparate spaces and territories”, through which, in the course of the spatial turn, space becomes a new description category in cultural studies.<sup>9</sup>

4 Claudia Keller, Jost Müller-Neuhof, and Katrin Schulze. „Leben wir in Parallelgesellschaften?“ *Der Tagesspiegel*, 09/17/2014: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/muslime-in-deutschland-leben-wir-in-parallelgesellschaften/10710570.html> (last accessed 03/15/2020).

5 Herzog-Punzenberger 2011.

6 Hannes Stein. „Warum ich für Parallelgesellschaften bin.“ *Welt*, 04/11/2015: <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article139378365/Warum-ich-fuer-Parallelgesellschaften-bin.html> (last accessed 07/20/2020).

7 Lefebvre 1974.

8 Löw 2016, 229.

9 Bachmann-Medick 2016, 219.

## Layers of usage and perception

The processes of perception, use, and appropriation are central to the production of space. As each of these processes obeys its own laws, each can lead to different spaces. Parallel spaces are being generated by the different perceptions, different uses, and different strategies of appropriation by individual actors and groups every day.

The view of the Schlern massif and the city of Völs in South Tyrol (Fig. 1) can be perceived in quite a variety of ways: the hiker or skier has very different space-bound associations than the farmer, who perhaps would think first of what excellent pasture the meadows make. Here too, the various possibilities for use control the perceptions. How different the archaeologist, who may think of the Brandopferplatz that dominates the view of the Schlern summit plateau and perhaps try to discern some landscape of prehistoric ritual. In all of these examples, the different perceptions depend on the knowledge of the landscape and its potential, and the way in which that knowledge is handled.

The varied uses and appropriations of the same space can be the result of a long-lasting process, for example the gradual displacement of agriculture on both sides of the Ruhr as heavy industry became ever more firmly established (Fig. 2). Even a snapshot of the parallel penetration of a space by two opposing economic concepts of space with different temporal depths can reveal much about the economic and social diversity of the region.

One glimpse can depict a parallel appropriation and definition of space that has existed for centuries, such as the view here of the Austrian village of Bad-Gleichenberg (Fig. 3): the village as political unit, parallel to the stations of the cross as a space-defining appropriation by the church. This kind of penetration can also provide short-term access that takes advantage of the situation for a limited time, implementing a new use for a space with a clearly assigned function – those of us from the older generation will vividly remember the car-free Sundays of the oil crisis in 1973–74 (Fig. 4).

These examples make it clear that the parallelism of use can refer either to the same exact space – the same street being used by cars or, in the exceptional state, by card players – or to a segmented total space whose individual parts are reserved for specific uses. Different spatial orders of various groups can therefore exist within spaces. These orders can either be separated from one another or can compete (or coexist) in accessing the same specific space.

For a long time, this everyday experience has had no effect on the archaeological disciplines, and on prehistoric archaeology in particular. Indeed, it was the desire for unity, for spatial homogeneity, that shaped the discourse and always found spatial expression as well. While the prehistoric peoples of Gustav Kossinna and the early studies of Vere Gordon Childe used space to distinguish themselves from the groups around them, this method was neutralized in favor of identifying archaeological cultures that were spatially recognizable, as exemplified by the early Bronze Age cultures of Europe (Fig. 5).

Today, research tends to focus on identifying regional groups and trends. The frame of reference is always spatial, however, and the idea of coincident cultural phenomena in space is the guiding principle. Different constructions and concepts of space are not interrogated in a contemporaneous perspective; rather, spatial differences only become visible in their evolution over time.

In the following, we wish to investigate to what extent the distribution of simultaneous archaeologically observable phenomena pertaining to the same space should instead be applied toward a differentiated view of societies. Can spatial structures that exist in parallel to one another be detected, structures that allow us to make statements about the different perception, use, and appropriation of one and the same physical space?

The search for concepts of space that exist in parallel to one another thus begins at the moment when different contemporaneous groups can be identified, along with evidence of their movement, perception, and use occurring within the same space. As part of this



Fig. 1 | View of the Schlern massif and the city of Völs in South Tyrol.



Fig. 2 | Parallel use of space: agriculture in the highly industrialized Ruhr region.



Fig. 3 | View of the *Kreuzweg* in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria. Overlapping religious, economic, and political concepts of space.



Fig. 4 | Oil crisis – Gathering on the street during the driving ban in Geldern/Niederrhein, summer 1973.



Fig. 5 | Presentation of prehistoric cultures as separate spatial entities, using the example of a map of early Bronze Age cultures in Europe.

process, parallel concepts of space can be recognized and analyzed either in the parallelism of the perception and use of space by different identity groups, or in terms of a parallelism of traditional and newly arising use of space by a member identity that may be splitting off.

Let us now consider some examples to illustrate the parallel use of space along the categories of status, economy, group identity, religion, and gender.

## Spatial localization of status and economy

The abundant ethnological material on the spatial order in traditionalist societies, as can be seen in Müller's ideal-typical topography of a house or Haller's structuring of interior and exterior worlds, shows how much information in archaeological sources remains hidden from us (Fig. 6).<sup>10</sup>

The clearest archaeological manifestation of variations in individual status is found in cemeteries. Rolling hills and an almost perfectly straight row of fire pits separate the mound of Seddin (Fig. 7), currently being investigated as part of a Topoi project, from a number of other burial mounds in the "Wickbold'sche Tannen", a forested area named for its former owner.<sup>11</sup> Natural and artificial borders highlight the site. At first glance, the grave goods seem to have less social significance than the isolated and prominent position of the mound (Fig. 8). But the individual elements of the funerary furnishings reveal an elite mode of burial among the upper classes in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE that was distributed across regions, both north and south of the Alps.

The early medieval Alemannic village of Lauchheim exhibits a very different kind of status representation in terms of space.<sup>12</sup> Whereas a nearby large cemetery was used to bury the dead of the village community, the richest graves were located within individual farmsteads (Fig. 9). Here, outstanding status would cause one's remains to be laid to rest in a divergent space: with the dead's final resting place on their own land, it is easy to imagine how the close spatial connection between the living and the dead was meant to ensure a continuity of status.

The fenced-in Iron Age settlement of Hodde (Jutland), which existed for over three centuries, is an ideal-typical demonstration that the spatial placement of status is also possible within the area of a settlement.<sup>13</sup> Even an aerial view clearly reveals the deep posts and ditches of the largest farmstead, which underwent a series of modifications over time (Fig. 10). Through all three centuries of settlement, the location of the largest farmstead remained stable in the northwest of the stockade-enclosed village. Even as the village grew, the farmstead site experienced only marginal changes. Mapping the sources of fine ceramics in the settlement area demonstrates a significant concentration in and around the prominent farm – another indication of status.

The South-East European Copper Age of the fifth millennium saw the emergence of specialized professions. In Pietrele, a settlement mound in Wallachia in southern Romania, one excavation area has yielded evidence of eight generations of houses at the same site between 4600 and 4300 BCE (Fig. 11).<sup>14</sup> This is where almost all of the hunting and fishing equipment, harpoons, and smaller projectiles were found, showing that a family specialized in fishing and hunting was domiciled here for a period of 250 to 300 years. The start of the profession can be seen, and its faithfulness to the site is apparent

10 K. E. Müller 1987; Haller 2005.

11 May 2018.

12 Stork 2004.

13 Hvass 1985.

14 Hansen 2015.



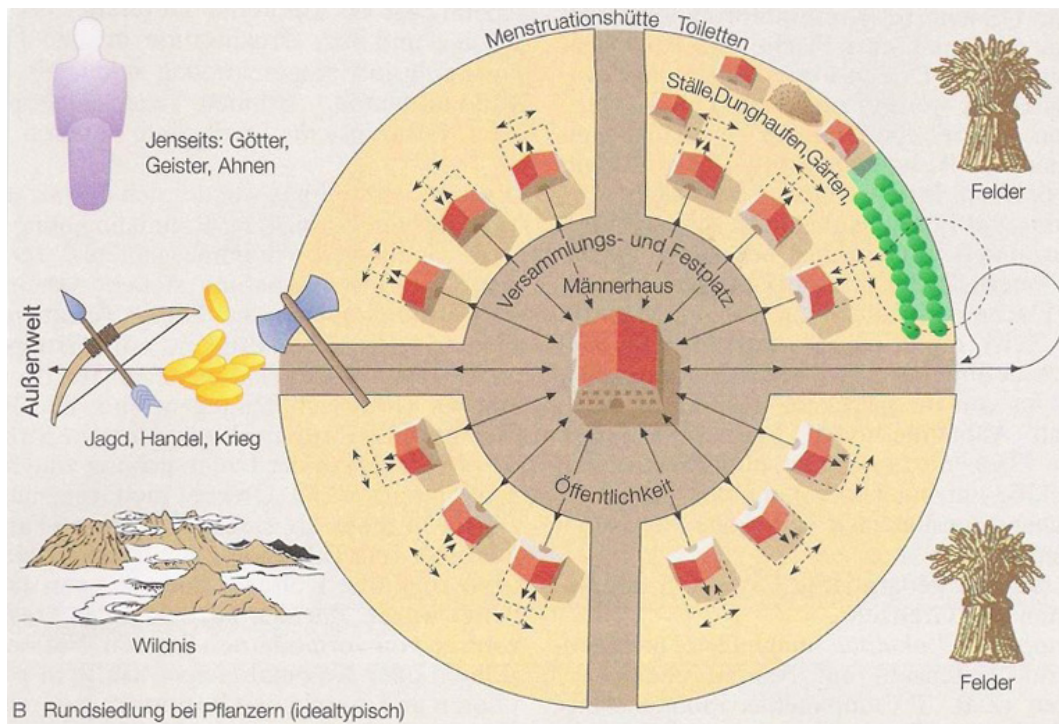


Fig. 6 | Ethnographic structuring of interior and exterior worlds.

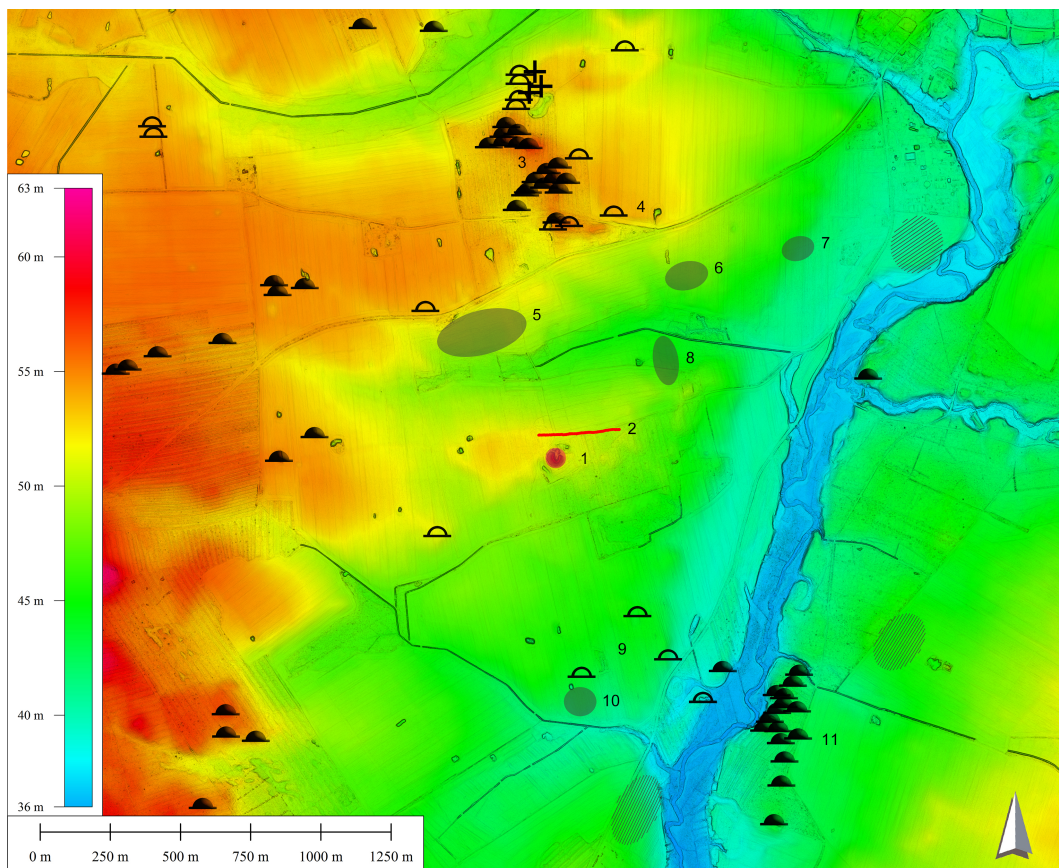


Fig. 7 | Seddin 'Königsgrab' and tumulus cemetery 'Wickboldt'sche Tannen'.



Fig. 8 | Seddin, 'Königsgrab': grave goods.

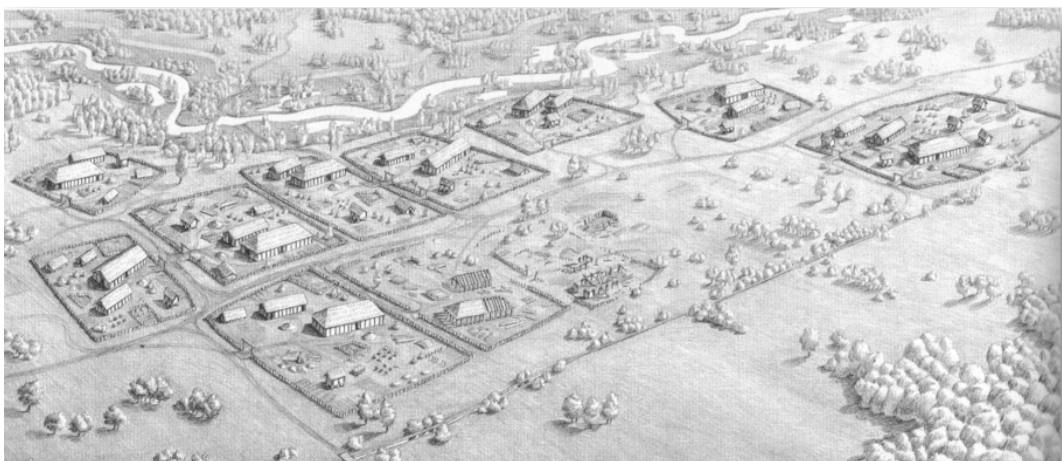


Fig. 9 | Reconstruction of the early medieval settlement Lauchheim. The homesteads include small cemeteries.



Fig. 10 | Hodde: aerial photograph of the largest farmstead.

in later eras as well. The uniform space of the settlement mound, itself separated from a flatland settlement, was inhabited for centuries by families with various specializations.

Scholarship that relies on material heritage has a relatively good chance of recognizing disparate economic activities occurring in the same space, even after centuries or millennia have passed. In Hodde, for example, the blacksmith's place of work also discloses his residence (Fig. 12): the distribution pattern of slags reveals a farmstead – complete with forge – on the southwestern side of the village. The forge is integrated into a normal home, whose inhabitants, like those in the other farmsteads of the settlement, were primarily involved in agricultural production.

Bronze workshops were among the work sites used to identify an artisan's district at the Early Iron Age site of Heuneburg some time ago. The district was located southeast of the hillfort, inside the community's walls. (Fig. 13).<sup>15</sup>

The exception to this rule are migrant groups that do not integrate, but rather, like the Linear Pottery culture (*Bandkeramik*) in Saxony, organize a parallel economy alongside the indigenous hunter-gatherer groups and can be clearly identified by their divergent patterns of land use. Harald Stäuble and Sabine Wolfram have demonstrated this very clearly using the example of Linear Pottery population in Saxony, which shared the space over a longer period with Mesolithic groups of hunters.<sup>16</sup> Paleogenetic and isotopic examinations of skeletons from the Blätterhöhle cave site near Hagen reveal a parallelism of hunting and farming life on the northern edge of the uplands as well. In this case, the authors explicitly speak of parallel societies.<sup>17</sup>

15 Kimmig 1983.

16 Stäuble and Wolfram 2013.

17 Bollongino et al. 2013; Orschiedt et al. 2014.



Fig. 11 | Pietrele: Excavation and finds.

## Group identity

Contrary to popular expectations, ethnic and religious groups are difficult to recognize, and usually are not identified in settlement material. The Jewish population of Rome, which was not in fact ethnically homogeneous, is known only because of the catacombs located in three cardinal directions of the city. The inscriptions found in these catacombs yielded the names of ten or eleven synagogues in the urban area, from which a significant number of Jewish residents could be deduced even without their having left any other archaeological traces in Rome to date.<sup>18</sup>

This works differently in colonial contexts, for example. The English settlers who founded the Chesapeake Bay colony at the mouth of the James River in 1607 are also clearly recognizable by their material culture with or without researchers' knowledge of the written sources, which clearly sets this group apart from the neighboring indigenous settlements.<sup>19</sup> Also visible, however, are very different concepts of space grounded in political and economic disparities, which in the English case also reflect the settlers' ignorance of the changing seasonal conditions of the natural environment. The colonizers pursued a clear plan not to become agriculturally active themselves, but to establish a base for trading. This is why they chose a location for the settlement that was easily accessible but had only very limited opportunities for self-sufficiency. The settlement network of indigenous tribes, by contrast, was geared toward sensible agriculture. They were seeing and evaluating the same space with a very different gaze; their location choice follows very different categories. Even without knowledge of the written sources, the potential for conflict is obvious just from the different conceptions of space in the approaches. This potential was fueled on the one hand by the need among the new settlers for the food supply from the indigenous settlements, and on the other by the newcomers' economic greed.

<sup>18</sup> Gross et al. 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Straube 2013.

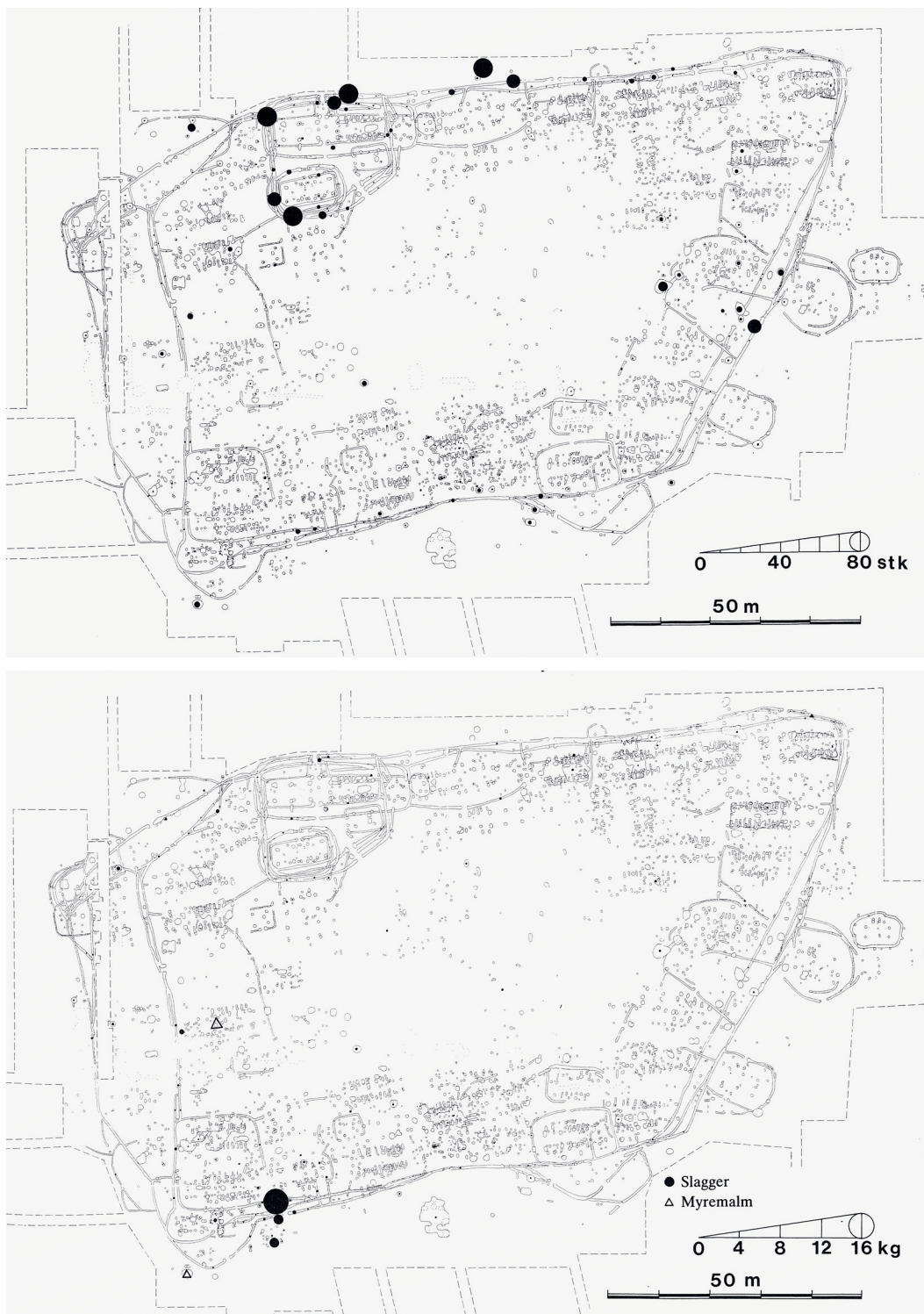


Fig. 12 | Plan of Hodde. Top: distribution of fine ware; bottom: distribution of slags.

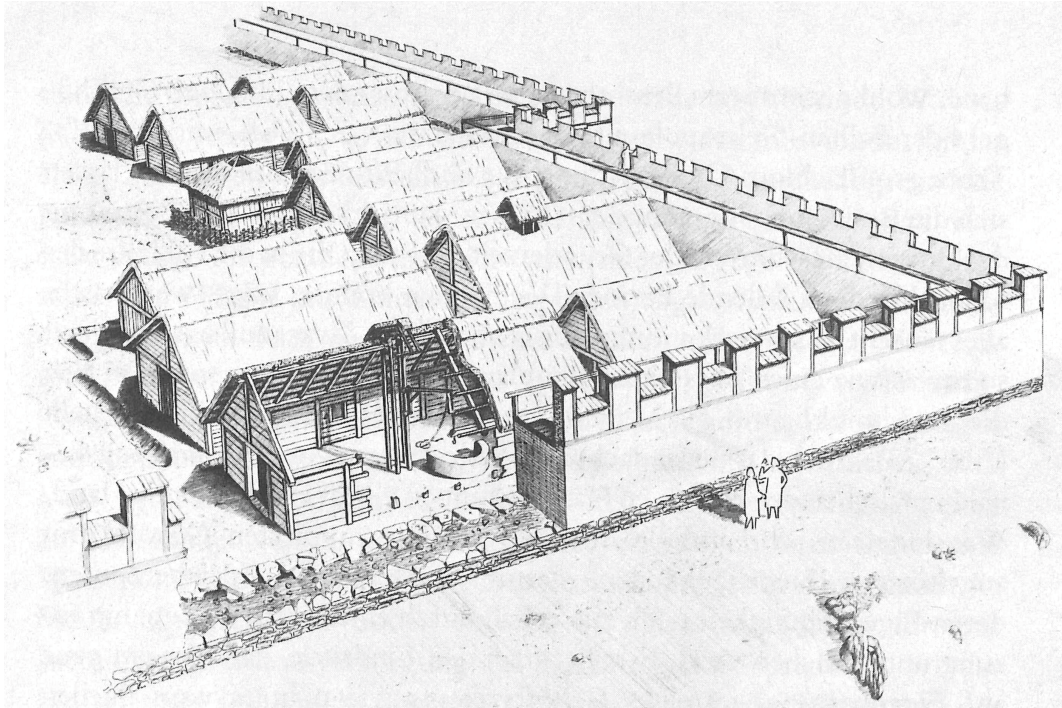


Fig. 13 | Heuneburg: Craftsmen's district in the southeast corner of the castle in period IV.

## Religious spaces

The cemetery itself is a particular form of the special use of space; burial grounds can assume tremendous spatial dimensions. Wildeshausen, one of the largest preserved burial mound fields in Germany (Fig. 14), can be understood in this way.<sup>20</sup>

The burial site near Sardis in western Anatolia is known as Bin Tepe, literally a thousand, but in reality comprises only 200 mounds. They are examples of vast spaces claimed completely by the dead.<sup>21</sup> Here a subspace has been separated from the entire space available to the settlement community. This subspace is then reconnected and reunified with the rest of the space on multiple occasions through processions, funeral ceremonies, and visits by the living. In this sense, these places of the dead are also parallel spaces – unlike those of the Neolithic cultures, for example, in which the deceased were often buried in the settlement or on the farmsteads themselves.<sup>22</sup> This division of space shaped the landscape, as well as the social interactions over considerable periods of time. For almost a millennium, for example, bodies were buried in the burial grounds of the Lusatian culture. The spatial separation of the dead from the living produces a stable spatial order, whereas other orders of space by gender or social class are more dynamic.

The Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem is a particular example of a ritual and memorial space that has been changed repeatedly over the centuries.<sup>23</sup> We can understand it through Maurice Halbwachs as a systematic topography, a frame that has evidently been deliberately created, whose beginning and end are factually or supposedly fixed, and whose existing emptiness is gradually filled with memories or ideas that were formerly scattered.

The Via Dolorosa does not exist only in one place, however, but theoretically in all the churches in which the Passion of the Christ is represented, so that one can comprehend it

20 R. Müller 2003.

21 Luke and Roosevelt 2016.

22 Veit 1996.

23 Halbwachs 2003, 15–16.



Fig. 14 | Wildeshausen burial grounds.

not only at its historical site in Jerusalem, but at any place designated as such. Even today, as shown in our initial example of Bad Gleichenberg (Fig. 3), stations of the cross shape the rural topography of many Catholic places. Many cities in the Middle Ages featured ‘real’ stations of the cross. Nuremberg’s, for example, stretched from the city gate to the Johannisfriedhof cemetery, with reliefs designating the seven stations.<sup>24</sup> The processions for Good Friday reproduce the ‘real’ topography of the Via Dolorosa.

This, then, is the case of a concrete space being multiplied by many other discrete spaces. Participation in the procession displaces people into another space, imaginary as well as real. Here exists a contemporaneous parallelism between the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem and the stations of the cross belonging to a church in a southern German city.

## Spaces of gender

The religious field as a whole plays a considerable role in the order of physical space. Pierre Bourdieu spoke of an “order of coexistence” in physical space.<sup>25</sup> This order of coexistence is simultaneously the result of, and the condition for, the social constitution of space. The social actors are assigned their place, whether the purpose of such assignments is to include as many actors as possible or to exclude some or many. In the sacred space, for example in churches, the “order of coexistence” is regulated by various approaches and by areas of use. The right half of the church is traditionally reserved for men, the left for women.

In some cases, we can recognize a parallelism of cemeteries along gender lines. In 2001, a graveyard with 32 graves and 50 burials from the Urnfield period was revealed in Neckarsulm.<sup>26</sup> The graves are simple, dug into the ground for inhumation (Fig. 15): an atypical form of burial at this time because cremation was the norm during this period. In addition to twenty individual inhumations, there are eight double inhumations, three triple inhumations, and one quintuple inhumation. Without exception, the graves are of juveniles and men. The cause of their deaths could not be determined. This cemetery has been interpreted as the burial place of a kind of warrior fellowship; the possibility of a homoerotic relationship between the buried warriors has also been discussed.<sup>27</sup>

The site’s interpretation as a cemetery of warriors follows the custom in the area of northern Germany of installing separate cemeteries for men at the turn of the eras. Analogous to this, there are also large necropolises where almost all of those buried were

24 Geyer 1905.

25 Bourdieu 2001, 172.

26 Knöpke 2009.

27 Stockhammer 2009.

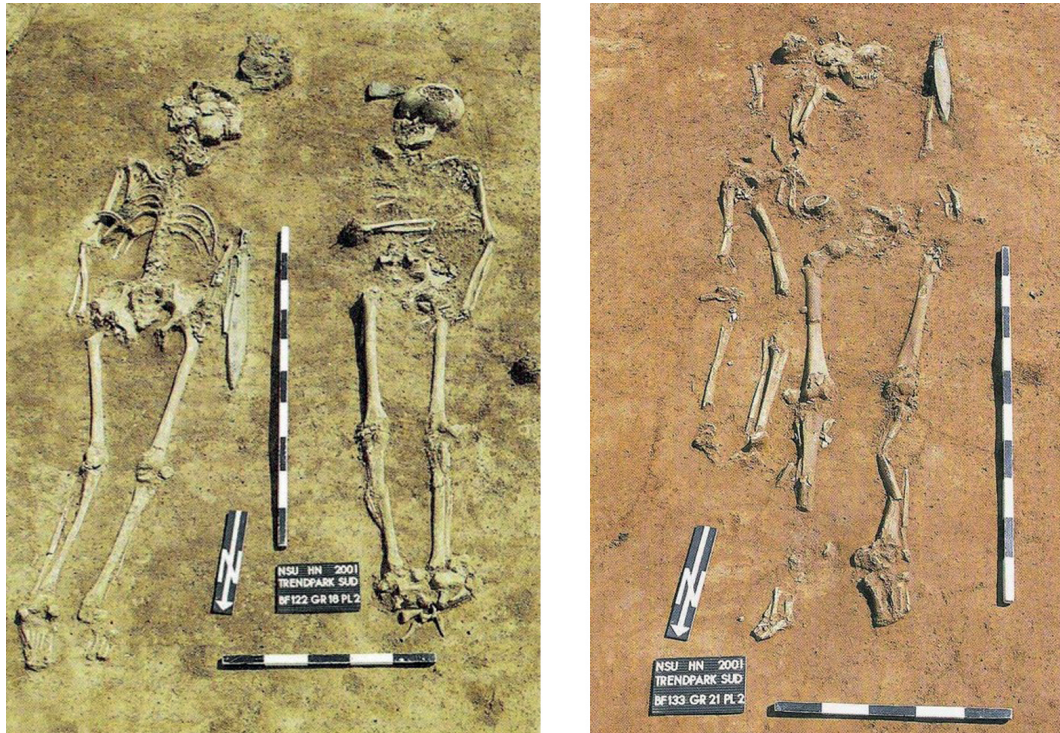


Fig. 15 | Burials from the men's burial ground in Neckarsulm.

women, such as the Iron Age cemetery of Hornbek in Holstein, with nine hundred burials over a period of three centuries.<sup>28</sup>

The exclusive use by women or men of these so-called sacred places can be archaeologically demonstrated. Examples are sacrificed needles<sup>29</sup> found in swamps where deposits with clearly male connotations are lacking, and necklaces of piked discs (*Stachelscheiben*), especially from altitudes.<sup>30</sup> Sacrifices found at springs are also often characterized by female dress ornaments.<sup>31</sup> These are places that are often at the limits of a settlement area, border spaces of isolation. Women's places.

An example of male-dominated spatial significance can be seen in the the military equipment sacrifices of the western Baltic Sea region dating from the imperial and migration eras. After a victorious battle – from the written sources and weapons graves, we can glean that those fighting were men – the equipment of the defeated enemy was dumped in the lake. In Jutland's Illerup – the best-studied landfill of this type – over forty thousand pieces of equipment from a thousand-man army were laid down and withdrawn from use (Fig. 16).<sup>32</sup> This is how a place charged with a wide variety of meanings was formed: a place of victory, a place of triumph, a place of supremacy. A men's place.

An interesting example of gender-specific communication spaces comes from the early Iron Age of the Caucasus, as presented by S. Reinhold in the conference anthology cited above.<sup>33</sup> Whereas the male sphere of weapons distribution circumscribes large spaces that are clearly separated from one another, the significantly smaller-scale areas of distribution for female types of jewelry are sometimes discordant to the male ones (Fig. 17). Separate

28 Rangs-Borchling 1963.

29 Hell 1953; Kubach 1978–1979.

30 Wels-Weyrauch 2008.

31 Muthmann 1975.

32 See for example Ilkjær 2002.

33 Reinhold 2013.





Fig. 16 | Illerup weapons deposition.

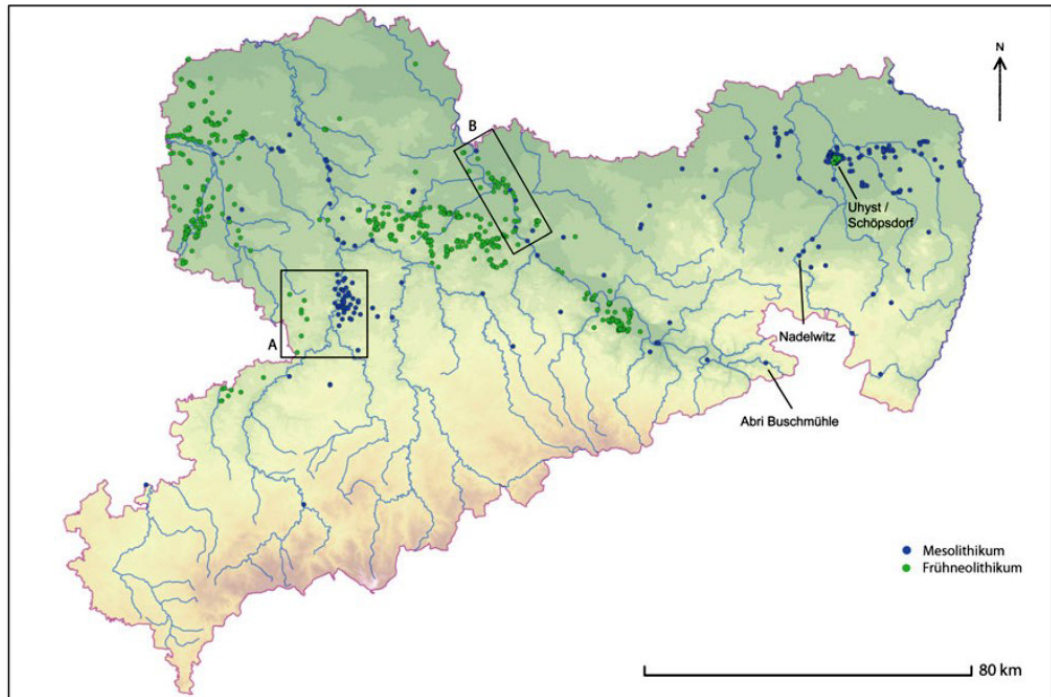
spaces of communication become visible, each of which had its own functions for the respective community. The spatial connection is controlled by the category of gender.

## Conclusion

These examples should be sufficient to show that space has been used in parallel for lengthy periods by various social groups, by men and women, by the living and the dead, by the rich and the poor, and by a variety of occupational groups. Often these are imaginary lines. Not infrequently, however, they are also tangible boundaries that reserve the space for the exclusive use of a social group. This is the “order of coexistence” or, in our terminology, a parallelism in the uses and concepts of space.

It is paradoxical for us to perceive space in its entirety when it is actually divided into small spaces of social groups existing in parallel. The subdivisions of the social space find their real and symbolic expression in the physical space.<sup>34</sup> From this practice of mutually determining the respective positions of each group, a space is *negotiated* that can be perceived as a joint order. When we focus on parallel spatial concepts, we can capture the contemporaneousness of several spaces through the differences in the actors. In archaeology, we do this through the empirically ascertainable facts of the distribution of objects and object concentrations, as well as increasingly through archaeobiological methods such as isotope studies of the diet of population groups. Moreover, both the imaginary and the manifest boundary lines in the space form the foundation for the differentiated perception of space by different social groups. The archaeological evidence of parallel social phenomena in space provides us with a more differentiated view of seemingly homogeneous early and prehistoric societies. They were in contrast more diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and social class affiliation.

34 Bourdieu 2001, 173.



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Fig. 17 | Ornament groups and warrior networks in the Caucasus (Koban B/C).

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