

1 Exploring the composition of lithic assemblages in Mesolithic
2 south-eastern Norway

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5 **Abstract**

6 This paper leverages multivariate statistics to explore the composition of 54 Mesolithic assemblages
7 located in south-eastern Norway. To provide analytical control pertaining to factors such as variable
8 excavation practices, systems for artefact categorisation and raw-material availability, the sites chosen
9 for analysis have all been excavated relatively recently and have a constrained geographical distribution.
10 The assemblages were explored following two strains of analysis. The first of these entailed the use of
11 artefact categories that are established within Norwegian Mesolithic archaeology, while the other involved
12 drawing on measures that have been linked directly to land-use and mobility patterns associated with
13 lithic assemblages more widely. The findings pertaining to the established artefact categories largely reflect
14 the temporal development previously reported in Norwegian Mesolithic research, which has been based on
15 more subjectively driven methods. Furthermore, the chronological trends associated with variables taken
16 from the so-called Whole Assemblage Behavioural Indicators (e.g. Clark and Barton 2017), originally
17 devised for characterising Palaeolithic assemblages in terms of associated mobility patterns, also align
18 with the development previously proposed in the literature. This provides an initial indication that these
19 measures are applicable in a Norwegian Mesolithic setting as well, setting the stage for a more targeted
20 and rigorous model evaluation outside this exploratory setting. Furthermore, this supports the notion that
21 these measures can offer a powerful comparative tool in the analysis of lithic assemblages more generally.

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25 **1 Introduction**

26 This study employs multivariate exploratory statistics to analyse lithic assemblages associated with a larger
27 number of Mesolithic sites located in south-eastern Norway. This is done to identify latent patterns and
28 structure in the relationship between the assemblages, with the ultimate aim of identifying behaviourally
29 induced variation in their composition across time. However, the composition of the assemblages can be
30 expected to be determined by a multitude of factors (e.g. Dibble et al. 2017; Rezek et al. 2020), ranging from
31 the impact of natural formation processes, to various and intermixed behavioural aspects such as purpose,
32 duration, frequency and group sizes at visits to the sites. The assemblages are also likely to be impacted
33 by variation in lithic technology, artefact function, use-life and discard patterns, as well as procurement
34 strategies and access to raw materials. Finally, analytic and methodological dimensions relating to survey,
35 excavation and classification practices are also fundamental to how the assemblages are defined. Consequently,
36 the analysis conducted here is done from an exploratory perspective, where all of these factors should be seen
37 as potential contributors to any observed pattern. In an attempt to limit the influence of some potentially
38 confounding effects, the material chosen for analysis has a constrained geographical distribution, and stems
39 from recent investigations that have employed comparable methods for excavation and classification within
40 larger unified projects.

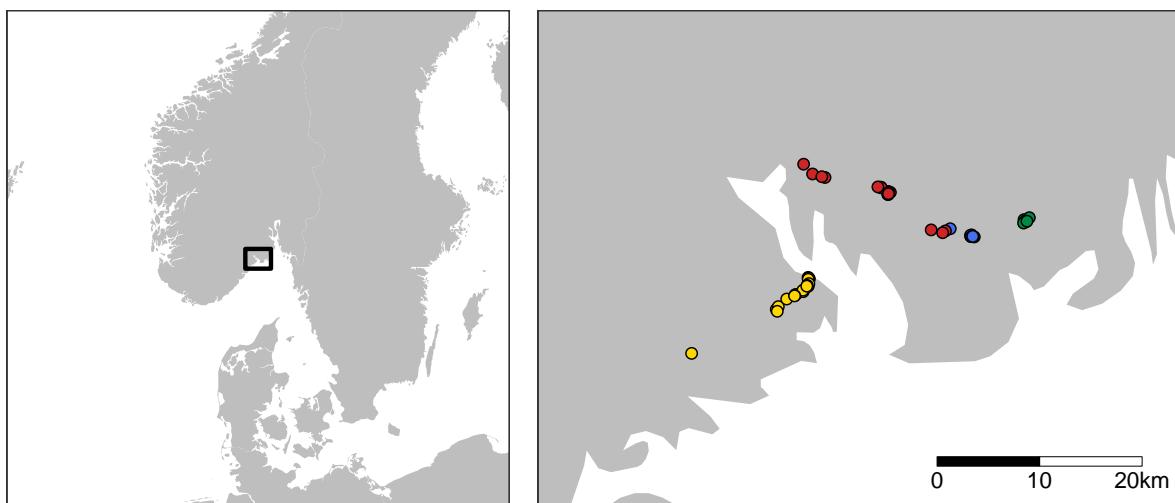
41 Even though each individual assemblage can have been impacted by an virtual infinitude of effects that might
42 skew an archaeological interpretation, this does not preclude the applicability of inductive analyses aimed
43 at revealing overarching structure in the data without imposing overly complex analytical frameworks that
44 attempt to account for these particularities (Bevan 2015). Structure that can be revealed from considering all
45 of the assemblages in aggregate can constitute a step in an iterative analytical chain that ultimately aims to
46 tease apart the multitude of factors that have shaped the composition of the assemblages, and should be of
47 value to subsequent in-depth studies of any individual site. The most immediate danger of the approach
48 outlined here is rather to be overly naive in the causal significance and cultural importance that is ascribed to
49 any identified pattern. As such, the main aim of this analysis is to compare the results with findings reported
50 in previous literature concerned with the Mesolithic in southern Norway and have the generation of new
51 hypotheses as a possible outcome. To this end, the analysis follows two analytical avenues. The first involves
52 an analysis of the assemblages using the classification of the artefacts done for the original excavation reports.
53 The second involves an analysis of the assemblages in light of the so-called Whole Assemblage Behavioural
54 Indicators (e.g. Clark and Barton 2017), which have been employed in other contexts to align properties of
55 lithic assemblages with land-use and mobility patterns.

56 2 Archaeological context and material

57 The Early Mesolithic, or Flake Axe Phase, is defined as lasting from c. 9200–8200 BCE (Reitan 2016) and
58 is set to start with the first recorded human presence in Norway. Previous research has typically proposed
59 that the Early Mesolithic is characterised by a relatively high degree of mobility, and low variation in site
60 types and associated mobility patterns (e.g. Bjerck 2008; Breivik and Callanan 2016; Fuglestvedt 2012; but
61 see Viken 2018). Around the transition to the subsequent Middle Mesolithic or Microlith Phase at c. 8200
62 BCE, pervasive changes in blade and axe technology occur (Damlien 2016; Eymundsson et al. 2018; Solheim
63 et al. 2020), which in turn has been associated with changes in population genomics and related migration
64 events hailing from the Eurasian steppes (Günther et al. 2018; Manninen et al. 2021). The Microlith Phase
65 is defined as lasting until around 7000 BCE, which is followed by the Pecked Adze Phase, characterised by
66 a more dominating presence of non-flint macro tools and associated production waste in the assemblages
67 (Reitan 2016). The next typological transition at c. 5600 BCE signifies the onset of the Nøstvet Adze Phase.
68 While previously defined as having a slightly longer duration, the Nøstvet Phase has traditionally been seen
69 as representing the onset of more varied settlement systems and stable mobility patterns (e.g. Jakslund
70 2001; Lindblom 1984). In recent years it has been suggested that the transition to a decrease in mobility
71 and more varied land-use patterns can be traced back to the Middle Mesolithic (Solheim and Persson 2016).
72 The subsequent Transverse Arrowhead Phase (c. 4500–3900 BCE) is characterised by a dramatic decrease in
73 axe finds, and the introduction of new flint projectiles (Reitan 2016). It has recently been suggested that a
74 dispersal of people from southern Scandinavia into southern Norway takes place in this period (Eigeland
75 2015:379; Nielsen 2021), which could follow after a preceding population decline at c. 4300 BCE (Nielsen
76 2021).

77 A defining characteristic of the Norwegian Mesolithic is that a clear majority of the known sites are located
78 in coastal areas (e.g. Bjerck 2008). Furthermore, these coastal sites appear to predominantly have been
79 located on or close to the contemporary shoreline when they were in use (Åstveit 2018; Breivik et al. 2018;
80 Møller 1987; Solheim et al. 2020). In south-eastern Norway, this pattern is combined with a continuous
81 regression of the shoreline, following from isostatic rebound (e.g. Romundset et al. 2018; Sørensen 1979).
82 The fairly rapid shoreline displacement means that the sites tend not to have retained their strategic or
83 ecologically beneficial shore-bound location for long periods of time (cf. Perreault 2019:47). Consequently,
84 the shore-bound settlement, combined with the rapid shoreline displacement has resulted in a relatively high
85 degree of spatial separation of cumulative palimpsests, to follow the terminology of Bailey (2007), while the
86 reconstruction of the trajectory of relative sea-level change allows for a relatively good control of when these
87 accumulation events occurred. In other parts of the world, a higher degree of spatial distribution means that
88 while the physical separation of material can help delineate discrete events, this typically comes at the cost of
89 losing temporal resolution as any stratigraphic relationship between the events is lost (Bailey 2007).

A



B

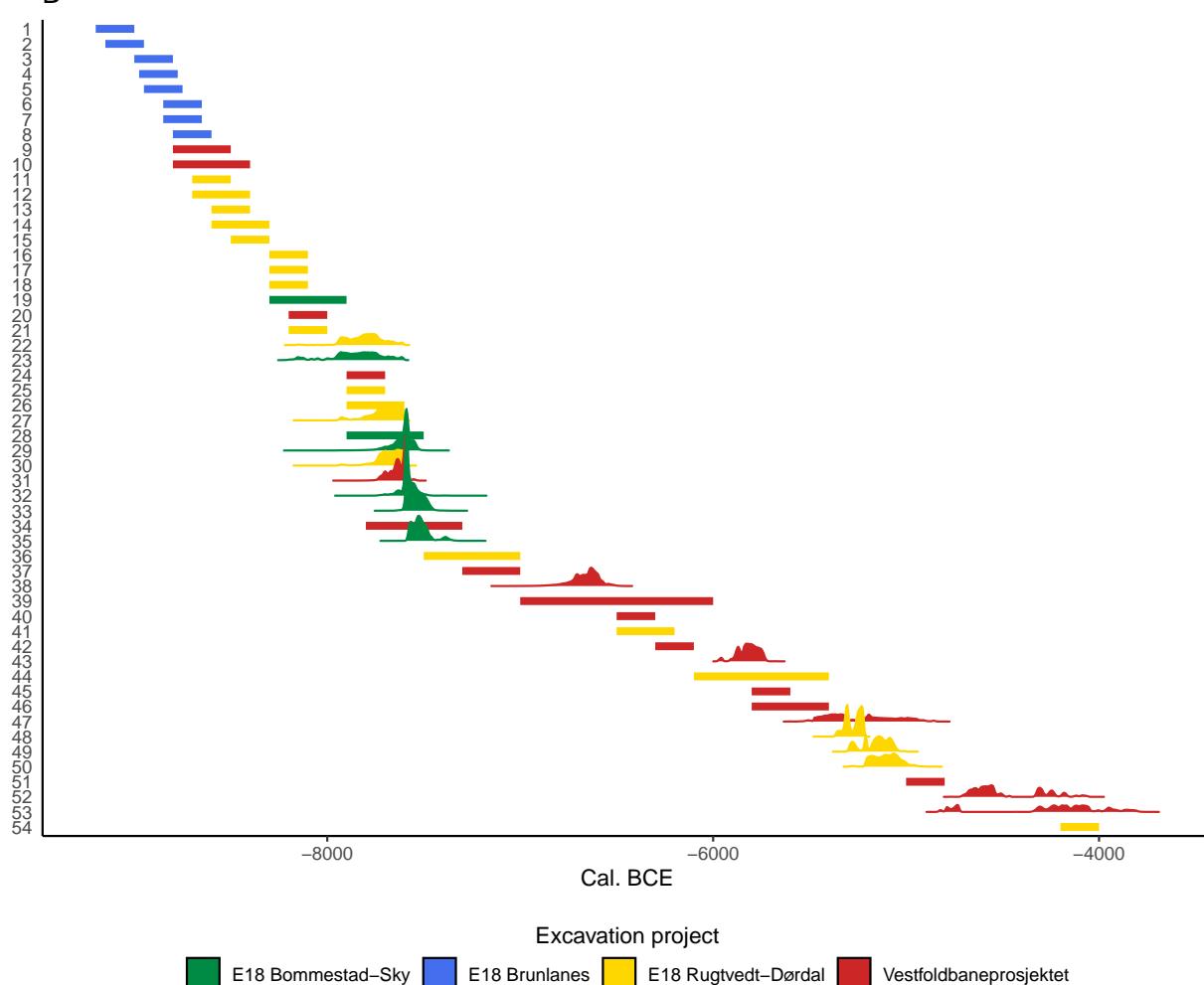


Figure 1: A) Spatial and B) temporal distribution of the sites chosen for analysis. Radiocarbon age determinations are given as the sum of the posterior density estimates. Solid lines indicate that the site has been dated with reference to relative sea-level change and typological indicators. These follow the original reports.

Table 1: Chronological framework. Glørstad's (2010) division of phases reflects the more established framework, to which Reitan (2016) has recently suggested considerable changes.

Glørstad (2004)	
Early Mesolithic, Fosna Phase	9500–8200 BCE
Middle Mesolithic, Tørkop Phase	8200–6300 BCE
Late Mesolithic, Nøstvet Phase	6300–4600 BCE
Late Mesolithic, Kjeøy Phase	4600–3800 BCE
Reitan (2016)	
Flake Axe Phase	9200–8200 BCE
Microlith Phase	8200–7000 BCE
Pecked Adze Phase	7000–5600 BCE
Nøstvet Adze Phase	5600–4500 BCE
Transverse Arrowhead Phase	4500–3900 BCE

90 The 54 coastal sites chosen for analysis here have a relatively limited geographical distribution in south-eastern
 91 Norway (Figure 1A). The sites were excavated as part of four larger excavation projects that all took place
 92 within the last 15 years (Jaksland and PerssonAnon 2014; Melvold and PerssonAnon 2014; Reitan and
 93 PerssonAnon 2014; SolheimAnon 2017; Solheim and DamlienAnon 2013). The sites included in the analysis
 94 consist of all Mesolithic sites excavated in conjunction with the projects that have assemblages holding more
 95 than 100 artefacts. The institution responsible for these excavations was the Museum of Cultural History
 96 in Oslo. This has led to a considerable overlap in the archaeological personnel involved, and comparable
 97 excavation practices across the excavations. Furthermore, with these projects, major efforts were made to
 98 standardise how lithic artefacts were to be classified at the museum (Koxvold and Fossum 2017; Melvold et al.
 99 2014). As a result, this should reduce the amount of artificial patterning in the data incurred by discrepancies
 100 in the employed systems for categorisation (cf. Clark and Riel-Salvatore 2006; Dibble et al. 2017).

101 The lithic data analysed is based on the classification of the site assemblages done for the original excavation
 102 reports, and consists of 48 variables representing differentdebitage and tool types. The artefact data have
 103 been divided into flint and non-flint materials. Flint does not outcrop naturally in southern Norway, and is
 104 only available locally as nodules that have been transported and deposited by retreating and drifting ice (e.g.
 105 Berg-Hansen 1999). This means that the distribution and quality of flint has been impacted by a diverse set
 106 of climatic and geographical factors (Eigeland 2015:46). Thus, while flint is treated as a unified category here,
 107 the variability in quality could have been substantial. Furthermore, the various non-flint raw materials that
 108 have been lumped together have quite disparate properties, where fine-grained cryptocrystalline materials are
 109 often used as a substitute or supplement to flint, while other, coarser materials are usually associated with
 110 the production of axes and other macro tools. Given this differentiated use, these raw-material properties are
 111 expected to be reflected in the retaineddebitage and tool categories. An important benefit of combining all
 112 of the non-flint materials is that this reduces the dependency on whether or not these have been correctly
 113 and consistently categorised for the reports (cf. Frivoll 2017). Finally, while factors such as landscape
 114 changes through shoreline displacement can have led to variable raw-material availability at the analysed sites,
 115 their relatively constrained geographical distribution hopefully counteracts some non-behavioural sources of
 116 variation.

117 3 The analysis of lithic assemblages

118 Studies concerned with chronological changes in the composition of lithic assemblages in southern Norway
 119 have typically had a focus on morphological variation among artefacts (e.g. Ballin 1999; Bjerck 1986; Reitan
 120 2016) or been concerned with technological processes associated with certain sub-categories of the site
 121 inventories, such as the production of blades or axes (e.g. Berg-Hansen 2017; Damlien 2016; Eymundsson et
 122 al. 2018; Solheim et al. 2020). Studies that have involved entire assemblages have either been concerned with

Table 2: Analysed sites.

no	Site name	Dating method	Reported start (BCE)	Reported end (BCE)
1	Pauler 1	Shoreline/typology	9200	9000
2	Pauler 2	Shoreline/typology	9150	8950
3	Pauler 3	Shoreline/typology	9000	8800
4	Pauler 5	Shoreline/typology	8975	8775
5	Pauler 4	Shoreline/typology	8950	8750
6	Pauler 6	Shoreline/typology	8850	8650
7	Bakke	Shoreline/typology	8850	8650
8	Pauler 7	Shoreline/typology	8800	8600
9	Nedre Hobekk 2	Shoreline/typology	8800	8500
10	Solum 1	Shoreline/typology	8800	8400
11	Tinderholt 3	Shoreline/typology	8700	8500
12	Tinderholt 2	Shoreline/typology	8700	8400
13	Dørdal	Shoreline/typology	8600	8400
14	Tinderholt 1	Shoreline/typology	8600	8300
15	Skeid	Shoreline/typology	8500	8300
16	Hydal 3	Shoreline/typology	8300	8100
17	Hydal 4	Shoreline/typology	8300	8100
18	Hydal 7	Shoreline/typology	8300	8100
19	Hovland 2	Shoreline/typology	8300	7900
20	Nedre Hobekk 3	Shoreline/typology	8200	8000
21	Hydal 8	Shoreline/typology	8200	8000
22	Hegna vest 1	Radiocarbon	8000	7800
23	Hovland 5	Radiocarbon	8000	7700
24	Sundsaasen 1	Shoreline/typology	7900	7700
25	Hegna øst 6	Shoreline/typology	7900	7700
26	Hegna vest 4	Shoreline/typology	7900	7600
27	Hegna vest 2	Radiocarbon	7900	7550
28	Nordby 2	Shoreline/typology	7900	7500
29	Hovland 4	Radiocarbon	7900	7500
30	Hegna vest 3	Radiocarbon	7800	7600
31	Prestemoen 1	Radiocarbon	7700	7600
32	Hovland 1	Radiocarbon	7700	7400
33	Hovland 3	Radiocarbon	7650	7450
34	Gunnarsrød 7	Shoreline/typology	7800	7300
35	Torstvet	Radiocarbon	7500	7100
36	Hegna øst 5	Shoreline/typology	7500	7000
37	Gunnarsrød 8	Shoreline/typology	7300	7000
38	Langangen Vestgård 1	Radiocarbon	6800	6600
39	Gunnarsrød 2	Shoreline/typology	7000	6000
40	Gunnarsrød 6b	Shoreline/typology	6500	6300
41	Hegna øst 7	Shoreline/typology	6500	6200
42	Gunnarsrød 6a	Shoreline/typology	6300	6100
43	Gunnarsrød 4	Radiocarbon	6000	5800
44	Stokke/Polland 3	Shoreline/typology	6100	5400
45	Gunnarsrød 10	Shoreline/typology	5800	5600
46	Langangen Vestgård 2	Shoreline/typology	5800	5400
47	Vallermyrene 4	Radiocarbon	5500	5200
48	Hegna øst 2	Radiocarbon	5350	5200
49	Stokke/Polland 8	Radiocarbon	5300	5200
50	Stokke/Polland 5	Radiocarbon	5300	5000
51	Prestemoen 2	Shoreline/typology	5000	4800
52	Vallermyrene 1	Radiocarbon	4700	4100
53	Langangen Vestgård 3	Radiocarbon	5	4350
54	Stokke/Polland 9	Shoreline/typology	4200	4000

123 general compositional traits such as relative frequency of various tool types and raw-materials (Breivik and
124 Callanan 2016; Breivik 2020; Reitan 2016; Viken 2018), or involved extremely in-depth studies of technological
125 organisation associated with a handful of assemblages (Eigeland 2015; Fuglestvedt 2007; Mansrud and
126 Eymundsson 2016). These studies are, however, based on narratively driven methods, leaving the weighting
127 of the different variables for the final interpretations unclear. To my knowledge, only a single study dealing
128 with the composition of Mesolithic assemblages in southern Norway has involved the use of a multivariate
129 quantitative framework, which was employed to structure the analysis of eight Middle Mesolithic assemblages
130 (Solheim 2013; see Glørstad 2010:145–146 for a spatial application). In sum then, previous studies have
131 typically either been limited to a small number of sites, to a subset of the inventories, to morphological
132 characteristics, or to subjectively and narratively driven methods that are difficult to scale and consistently
133 balance in the comparison of a larger number of artefact categories and assemblages.

134 The aim of the first part of the analysis conducted here is to evaluate the degree to which the composition
135 of the assemblages align with earlier studies that have employed more informal methods. This therefore
136 assumes that the artefact categories employed in Norwegian Stone Age archaeology are, at least to a certain
137 extent, behaviourally meaningful. However, the approach taken is also partially informed by the so-called
138 Frison effect (Jelinek 1976), which pertains to the fact that lithics studied by archaeologists can have had
139 long and complex use-lives in which they took on a multitude of different shapes before they were ultimately
140 discarded. Several scholars have built on this to argue that morphological variation in retouched lithics from
141 the Palaeolithic cannot be assumed to predominantly be the result of the intention of the original knapper to
142 reach some desired end-product, but rather that what is commonly categorised as discrete types of artefacts
143 by archaeologists can instead in large part be related to variable degrees of modification through use and
144 rejuvenation (e.g. Barton 1991; Barton and Clark 2021; Dibble 1995). Artefact categories believed not to
145 be internally consistent and categorically exclusive have therefore been collapsed for the analysis, as their
146 contribution as discrete analytical units could potentially be misleading.

147 However, for the most part we lack even a most basic understanding of what any individual lithic object
148 in an assemblage has been used for (Dibble et al. 2017). For example, a vast amount of artefacts defined
149 as debitage are likely to have fulfilled the function of tools, and both debitage and formal tool types could
150 have had various different purposes and had a multitude of shapes throughout their use-life. While use-wear
151 analysis could potentially offer a way to identify what artefacts were used for towards the end of their use-life,
152 these kinds of analyses are extremely time-consuming and are therefore typically only conducted on a smaller
153 number of artefacts that have already been selected for analysis based on their shape (e.g. Solheim et al.
154 2018). Thus, while these analyses can potentially get at in-group variation pertaining to the end-state of a
155 group of artefacts, they do not tell us whether or not their classification as a unified group is meaningful
156 in the first place (Dibble et al. 2017). As a consequence, the second part of the analysis employs a suite
157 of measures developed for the classification of lithic assemblages with these inferential limitations in mind
158 (Barton et al. 2011; Clark and Barton 2017, and below). The logic behind these measures are founded on an
159 understanding of technology as being organised along a continuum ranging between curated and expedient
160 (Binford 1973, 1977, 1979). An expedient technological organisation pertains to the situational production of
161 tools to meet immediate needs, with little investment of time and resources in modification and rejuvenation,
162 resulting in high rates of tool replacement. Curated technological organisation, on the other hand, has been
163 related to manufacture and maintenance of tools in anticipation of future use, the transport of these artefacts
164 between places of use, and the modification and rejuvenation of artefacts for different and changing situations.

165 However, following not least from the ambiguous definition first put forward by Binford (1973), the theoretical
166 definition of curation, its archaeological correlates, and behavioural implications have been widely discussed
167 and disputed (e.g. Bamforth 1986; Nash 1996; Shott 1996; Surovell 2009:9–13). Still, that the distinction can
168 offer a useful analytical point of departure if clearly and explicitly operationalised seems more or less agreed
169 upon, and some dimensions of the concept are generally accepted. For example, although precisely how it is
170 measured may vary, the empirical correspondent to a curated technological organisation is typically defined
171 by high degrees of retouch, as this is commonly seen as a means of realising the potential utility of a tool—or
172 extending its use-life—by the repeated rejuvenation and modification of edges (e.g. Bamforth 1986; Dibble
173 1995; Shott and Sillitoe 2005).

174 One concrete operationalisation of the terms has been forwarded by Barton (1998) and colleagues (Barton

175 et al. 1999, 2011, e.g. 2013; Barton and Riel-Salvatore 2014; Clark and Barton 2017; Riel-Salvatore and
176 Barton 2004, 2007; Villaverde et al. 1998), who through a series of studies have shown that the relationship
177 between volumetric density of lithics and relative frequency of retouched artefacts in lithic assemblages have
178 a consistent negative relationship across a wide range of chronological and cultural context, ranging from
179 Pleistocene and Holocene assemblages in Europe and Asia, to assemblages associated with both Neanderthals
180 and modern humans (Barton et al. 2011; Riel-Salvatore et al. 2008). This relationship is taken to reflect
181 degree of curation, and is in turn mainly to follow from the accumulated nature of land-use and mobility
182 patterns associated with the assemblages (Barton and Riel-Salvatore 2014). Furthermore, the relationship
183 between curated and expedient technological organisation has been related to the continuum defined by
184 Binford (1980) between residentially mobile foragers and logically mobile collectors (Clark and Barton 2017;
185 Riel-Salvatore and Barton 2004; see also Bamforth 1986; Binford 1977). Residential mobility involves the
186 movement of entire groups between resource patches throughout the year, while logistic mobility entails the
187 use of central base-camps that are moved less often and from where task-groups venture on targeted forays to
188 retrieve specific resources. A higher degree of logistic as opposed to residential mobility thus involves a wider
189 range of site types and associated mobility patterns (Binford 1980).

190 In this model, higher degree of mobility would mean a higher dependency on the artefacts and the material
191 people could bring with them, and dimensions such as weight, reliability, repairability, and the degree to
192 which artefacts could be manipulated to fulfil a wide range of tasks are therefore assumed to have been
193 factors of concern. From this it follows that the empirical expectation for short-term camps is a curated
194 technological organisation with higher relative frequency of retouched artefacts, and a lower overall density of
195 lithics (Clark and Barton 2017). More time spent in a single location, on the other hand, is assumed to lead
196 to better control of raw-material availability and to allow for its accumulation. This should in turn lead to a
197 more expedient technological organisation with reduced necessity for the conservation of lithics and extensive
198 use of retouch. The empirical expectation for lower degree of mobility is therefore relatively high density of
199 lithics, a low relative frequency of retouched artefacts, as well as a higher number of cores and unretouched
200 flakes and blades. These variables and underlying logic constitute what has been termed Whole Assemblage
201 Behavioural Indicators (WABI, Clark and Barton 2017), and is the main framework adopted here.

202 As these measures are argued to predominantly be determined by land-use and mobility patterns, relative
203 frequency of chips and relative frequency of non-flint material are also included in the analysis, as these
204 measures have also been linked to mobility patterns and is of central importance in Norwegian Stone Age
205 archaeology (e.g. Bicho and Cascalheira 2020; Breivik et al. 2016; Kitchel et al. 2021; Reitan 2016)—the use
206 of local non-flint material has been taken to indicate reduced mobility and increased familiarity with local
207 surroundings (Glørstad 2010:181; Jakslund 2001:112).

208 4 Methodology

209 The exploratory approach taken here means that a wide range of combinations and transformations of
210 variables has been explored to identify patterning in the data. While only parts of this process can sensibly
211 be reported upon, the data and employed R programming script is freely available as a research compendium
212 at [URL placeholder], following Marwick et al. (2018).

213 The 54 analysed sites have been dated by reference to relative sea-level change, typology and/or radiocarbon
214 dates (Table 1). Date ranges for sites based on shoreline displacement and typology are taken from the original
215 reports and follow the evaluation done by the original excavators. Where radiocarbon age determinations
216 believed to be associated with the lithic material are available, these have been calibrated using the IntCal20
217 calibration curve (Reimer et al. 2020) and subjected to Bayesian modelling using OxCal v4.4.4 (Bronk
218 Ramsey 2009) through the oxcAAR package (Hinz et al. 2021) for R (R Core Team 2020). The only
219 constraint imposed for the modelling of the dates was that the dates from each site are assumed to represent
220 a related group of events through the application of the Boundary function (Bronk Ramsey 2021). The
221 resulting posterior density estimates were then summed for each site. Radiocarbon data is provided in the
222 supplementary data (see also Solheim (2020)).

223 The first part of the analysis involves employing the method of correspondence analysis (CA), using the lithic
224 count data as classified for the original excavation reports. As this part of the analysis partially draws on the
225 above-mentioned Frison effect, several artefact categories have been collapsed for the CA. This for example
226 pertains to flint tool types such as scrapers, burins, drills, knives and otherwise indeterminate artefacts
227 with retouch. These have all been combined into the single category “small flint tools.” (A full overview
228 of the aggregated variables and their constituent parts is provided in the supplementary material). While
229 aggregating artefact categories in this manner could potentially subsume important variation, it does also
230 reduce the possibility that any conclusions are not simply the result of employing erroneous units of analysis.

231 Following the WABI and other factors associated with mobility patterns, as presented above, the variables
232 employed in the second part of the analysis are relative frequency of secondarily worked lithics (RFSL),
233 defined as the proportion of the assemblages constituted by retouched or ground lithics; volumetric density of
234 lithics (VDL), defined as number of artefacts per excavated m³; relative frequency of chips, defined as the
235 proportion of artefacts with size < 0.1 cm; relative frequency of cores, the proportion of all artefacts classified
236 as cores in the original reports; relative frequency of blanks, here defined as the proportion of all artefacts
237 classified as flakes, blades, micro-blades or fragments; and finally relative frequency of non-flint material.
238 Following Bicho and Cascalheira (2020), the analysis is done using principal components analysis (PCA),
239 leading to a shift in focus from the relative composition emphasised by the CA, to having more weight placed
240 on patterning in the most abundant occurrences (Baxter 1994:71–77).

241 A note should also be made on the fact that a few variables that are sometimes invoked for the classification
242 of sites in terms of associated mobility patterns are omitted here (e.g. Bicho and Cascalheira 2020; Breivik et
243 al. 2016). For the assemblage data itself this especially pertains to diversity in tool-types (Canessa 2021),
244 which has been omitted in light of the above-mentioned Frison effect. Number of features on the sites has
245 also been disregarded as taphonomic loss is likely to have led to a chronological bias in their preservation.
246 Similarly, the number of activity areas, effectively number of artefact clusters, however defined, has also been
247 disregarded. This follows most notably from the fact that the impact of post-depositional processes at Stone
248 Age sites in Norway is arguably understudied (Jørgensen 2017). This pertains for example to bio-turbation
249 in the form of three-throws, which can have a detrimental effect on the original distribution of artefacts, and
250 which can be expected to have impacted several of the sites treated here (Darmark 2018; Jørgensen 2017).

251 5 Results

252 The general impression from the CA is that a chronological dimension is associated with the patterning
253 in the data (Figure 2). This is indicated by the general transition across the colour scale in the row plot
254 (Figure 2A), the fact that the two first dimensions of the CA accounts for as much as 80.53 % of the inertia
255 or variance in the data, as well as the horseshoe curve or Guttman effect evident in the column plot (Figure
256 2B, Baxter 1994:119–120).

257 The column plot reveals that the earliest sites are characterised by the flint artefact categories microburins,
258 projectiles, as well as flint macro tools and associateddebitage. It is also interesting that these sites to
259 a larger extent are characterised by core fragments, both in flint and non-flint materials, rather than the
260 cores themselves. The non-flint material on the earliest, or among the earliest sites, appears to be centred
261 around the production of projectiles, as both the projectiles themselves and non-flint blades are important
262 constituents of the assemblages at these sites. The first dimension, which is pulling some of the later sites
263 towards the right of the plot, is mainly defined by macro tools and associateddebitage in non-flint materials
264 that are negatively correlated with more flint dominated assemblages. Site number 9, Nedre Hobekk 2,
265 located in the upper right quadrant of the row plot represents a somewhat curious case in that it is an early
266 assemblage characterised by axe production in metarhyolite (Eigeland 2014). However, as the site had been
267 quite heavily impacted by modern disturbances, this led Eigeland (2014:124) to suggest that the material
268 might have been compromised. This could explain its position as an outlier in the plot. Finally, although the
269 sample size is quite strained and the discussion of finer chronological points might not be warranted, the first
270 dimension does appear to be of less importance for the absolute latest sites, as indicated by their location
271 to the left of the plot.

272 As most of the variation in the data is accounted for by the dominating non-flint material in later assemblages,
273 this suppresses and makes it difficult to discern patterns in the flint data. A second CA was therefore run
274 excluding the non-flint material (Figure 3). While not as substantial, there is clear temporal patterning in
275 the flint data as well. This is most marked for the earliest sites which are pulled away from the main cluster,
276 as projectiles, microburins, macro tools and debitage from their production characterises these sites. Slightly
277 younger sites appear more impacted by core fragments and blades. The temporal transition in the main
278 cluster is not as marked, but clearly present, and is driven by a larger proportion of blades, flakes and small
279 tools in the earliest assemblages of the cluster, which is opposed to chips, fragments and partly micro-blades.

280 Moving on to the PCA of measures that have been linked to mobility, some of the variables with severely
281 skewed distributions were initially transformed (Figure 4). Figure 5 displays the resulting PCA. There is
282 a general temporal transition from the upper left to the bottom right of the plot. The second dimension
283 is mainly defined by a negative correlation between the VDL and RFSL (Figure 6). Almost orthogonal
284 to this is the strong negative correlation between relative frequency of chips and blanks. While there is
285 a slight tendency for blanks to be more associated with younger sites, frequency of chips appears to be
286 largely independent of time. However, this almost suspiciously strong negative correlation can perhaps have
287 a practical explanation. Seeing as the frequency of non-flint material is positively correlated with blanks and
288 negatively correlated with chips (Figure 4), one explanation to this pattern could be that smaller non-flint
289 pieces are simply more difficult to identify and separate from naturally fragmented stone during excavation
290 and classification. This could conceivably have led to an over-representation of blanks as compared to chips in
291 assemblages with a high proportion of non-flint material. While this is not necessarily the entire explanation,
292 this does make it difficult to place much analytical weight on this pattern. Relative frequency of cores is not
293 especially impactful in the PCA, and appears to be independent of the temporal dimension as well. That is
294 not to say that cores may not be indicative of or related to mobility patterns, but to get at this may require
295 further analysis beyond their simple classification as cores (Kitchel et al. 2021).

296 Thus, while some secondary expectations of the WABI do not seem to apply to the present material, it is
297 difficult to say to what degree this is caused by idiosyncrasies in the Norwegian system for classification of
298 lithics and properties of the lithic material itself. The relationship between VDL and RFSL does correspond
299 to the model and follows a clear temporal trend that is also correlated with the increased use of local raw
300 material. Thus, if the relationship between VDL and RFSL is accepted as a proxy for curation, and is related
301 to land-use and mobility patterns, these findings would be in line with previous research into the Mesolithic
302 of Norway, indicating that earlier sites are associated with higher degree of mobility than sites from later
303 phases (e.g. Bergsvik 2001; Bjerck 2008; Glørstad 2010; Jakslund 2001). To explore this proposition further,
304 these two variables are subjected to more detailed scrutiny below.

305 There is a strong negative correlation between the two variables ($r = -0.5$) and a general tendency for younger
306 sites to be associated with a higher VDL and a lower RFSL than older sites (Figure 7A). The linear correlation
307 is stronger between the mean site age and RFSL ($r = -0.51$), than between mean site age and VDL ($r = 0.22$).
308 Variable non-flint availability and workability has also been suggested to potentially impact these dimensions
309 (cf. Manninen and Knutsson 2014), but while the negative correlation is slightly less marked when only the
310 flint data is considered ($r = -0.4$), the general pattern is the same (Figure 7B). The relationship between mean
311 site age and relative frequency of secondarily worked flint is even stronger ($r = -0.57$), but as indicated by
312 the more spread out distribution along the x-axis, the volumetric density of flint is not temporally contingent
313 ($r = 0.1$). As was also indicated by the CA, this follows from the fact that non-flint materials make up a
314 higher share of the assemblages for some of the later Mesolithic sites, and is a point returned to below where
315 the temporal dimension of the relationship between VDL and RFSL is explored further.

316 To get more directly at this temporal trend, a curation index based on VDL and RFSL was devised by first
317 performing a min-max normalisation of the two variables, scaling them to take on values between 0 and 1.
318 The values for artefact density was then made negative to reflect its relationship with degree of curation. The
319 mean was then found for each site on these two normalised values. To account for the temporal uncertainty
320 associated with the dating of the sites, a simulation-based approach was also adopted (e.g. Crema 2012;
321 Orton et al. 2017). A LOESS curve was fit to the curation index and site age for each simulation run, where
322 the age of each site was drawn as a single year from their respective date ranges as provided in Figure 1.
323 For sites with radiocarbon age determinations the dates were drawn from the summed posterior density

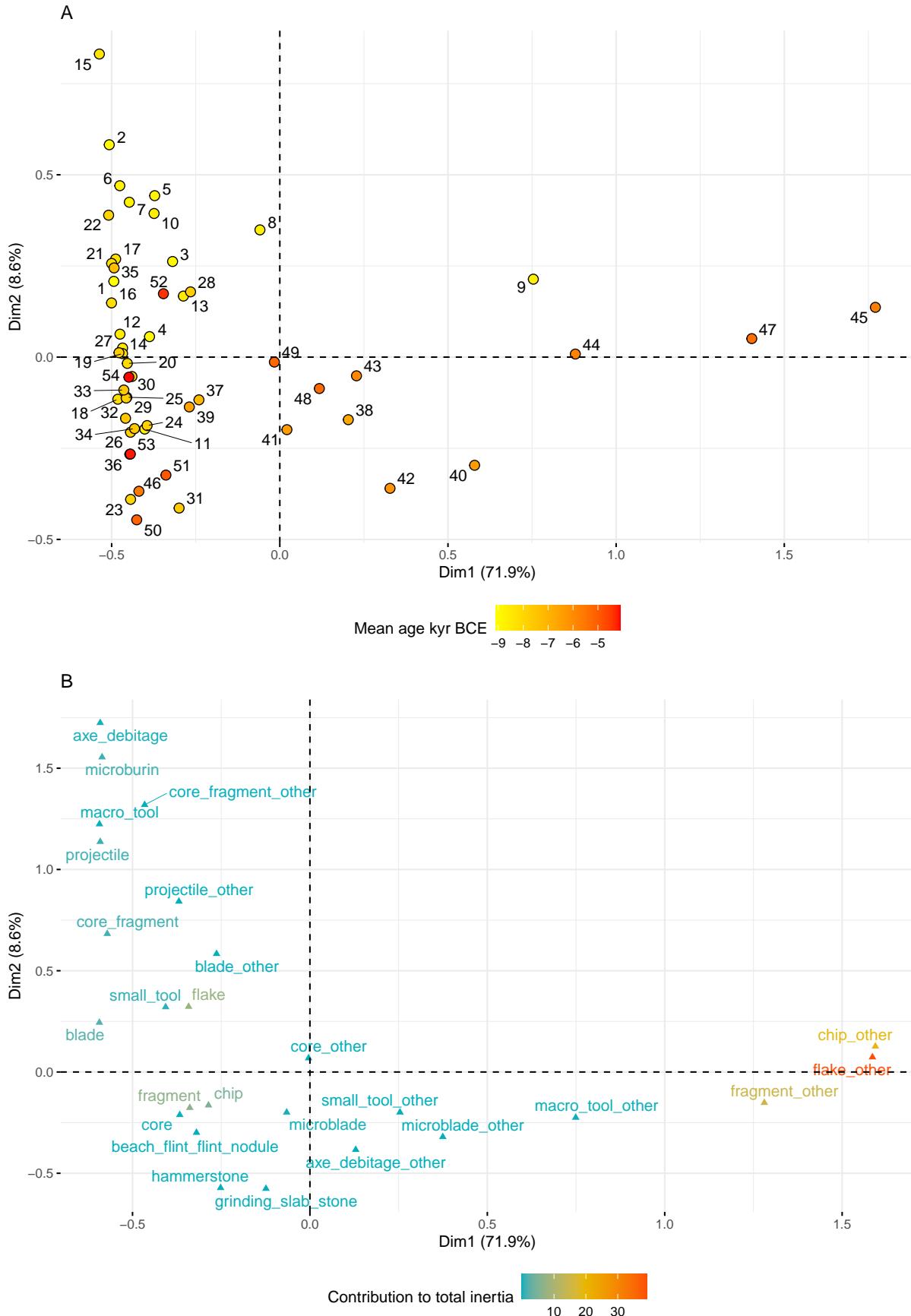


Figure 2: Correspondence analysis using the artefact count data. A) Row plot, B) Column plot.

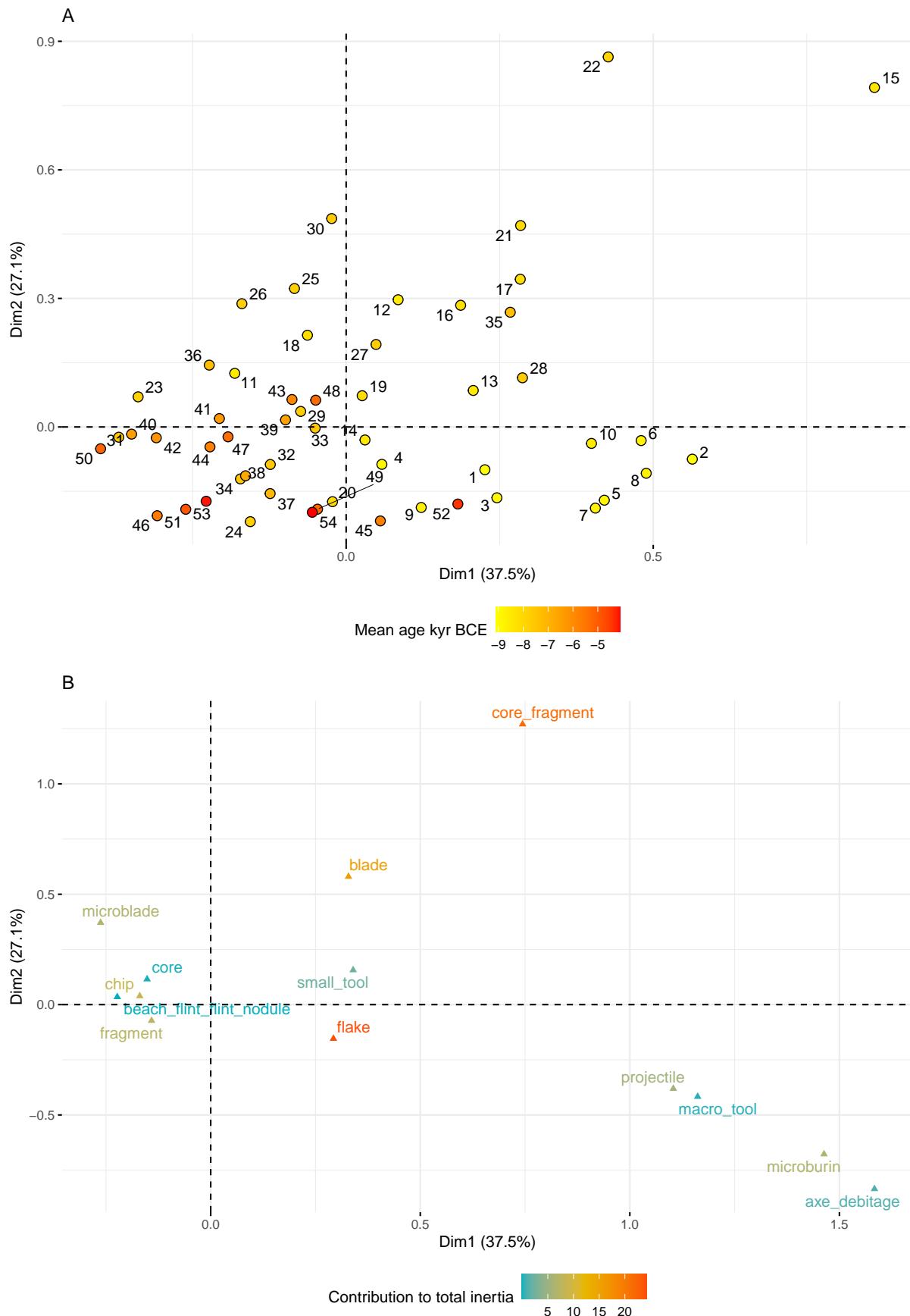


Figure 3: Correspondence analysis using the flint data. A) Row plot, B) Column plot.

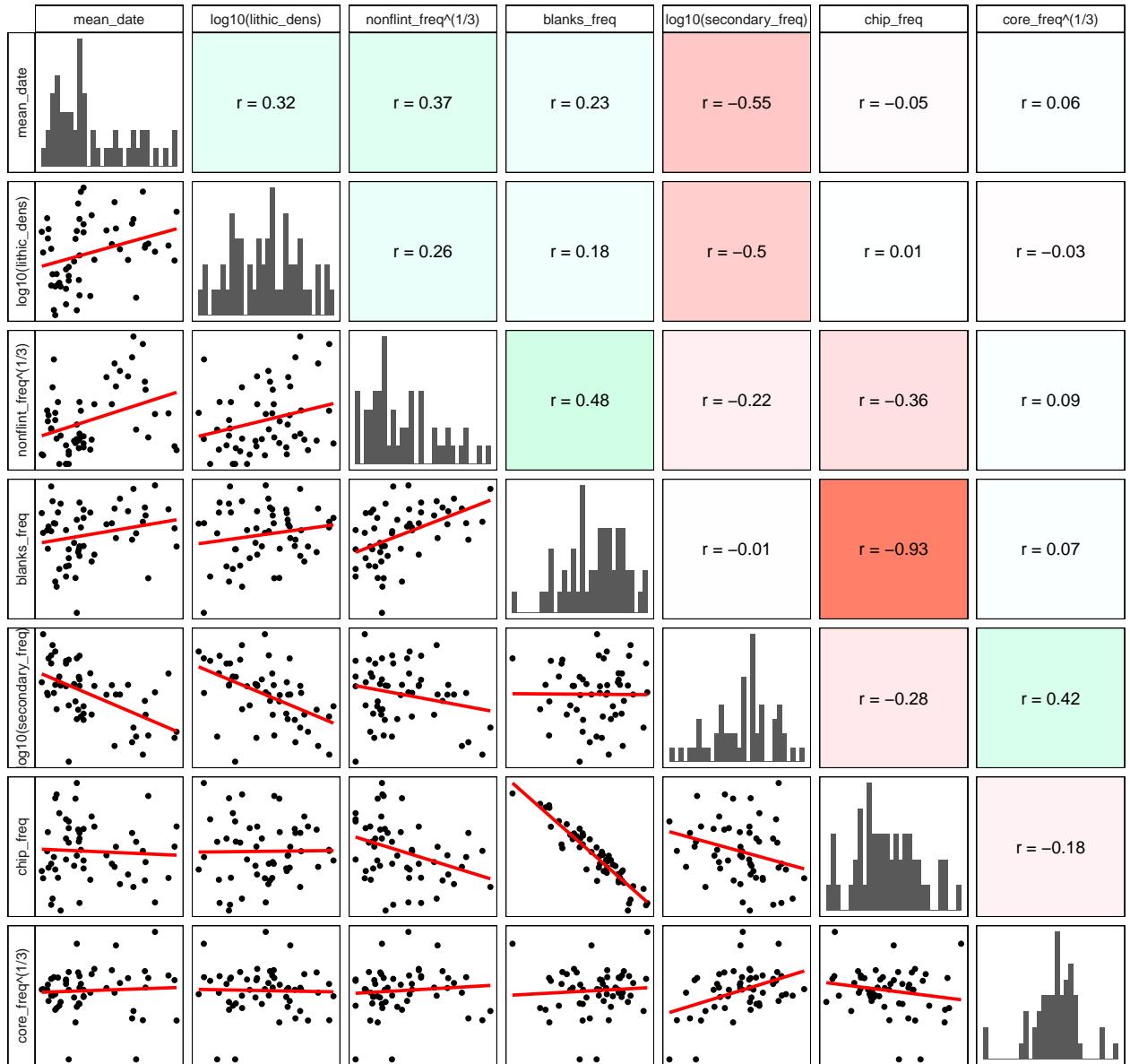


Figure 4: Correlation matrix showing transformation of skewed variables for the PCA. The mean age of the sites has also been included to visualise overall temporal trends. Cells below the diagonal display the bivariate distributions with a fitted OLS-regression. The cells above the diagonal display and are coloured by the corresponding Pearson's correlation coefficient.

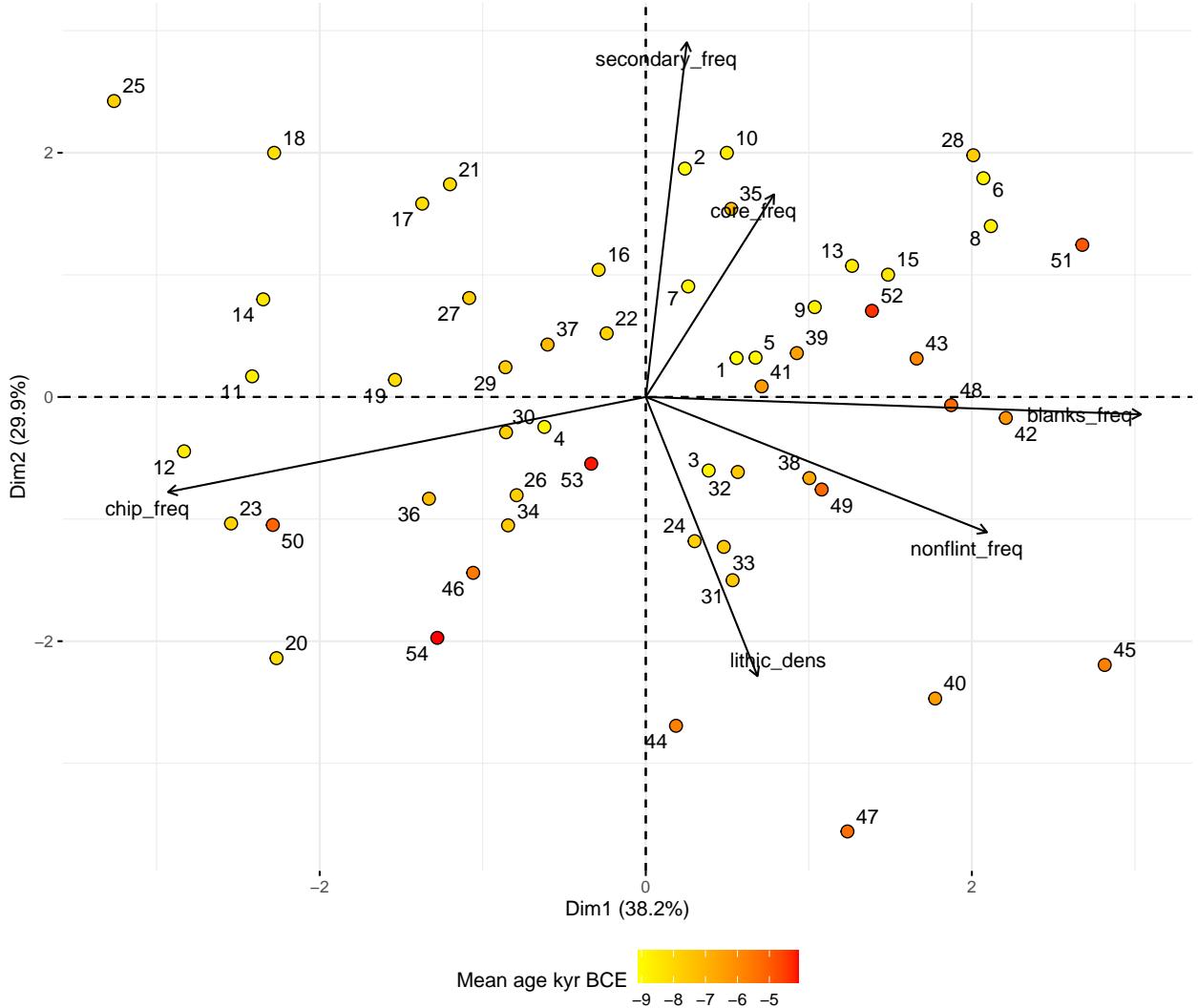


Figure 5: PCA using variables that have been related to mobility patterns. Note that details on the transformation of the variables has been left out of the plot for clarity, but follow those given in Figure 4.

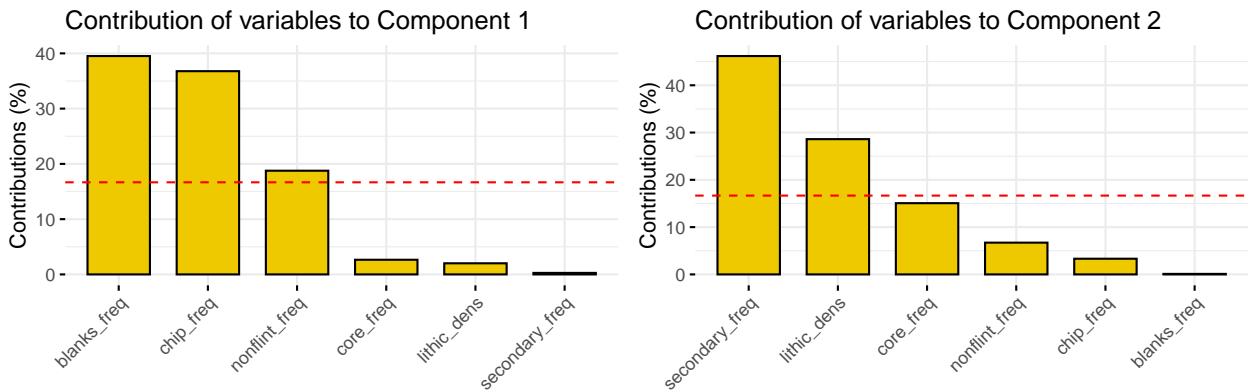


Figure 6: Contribution of variables to the components of the PCA. The dotted red line indicates the expected contribution from each variable given a uniform distribution of impact.

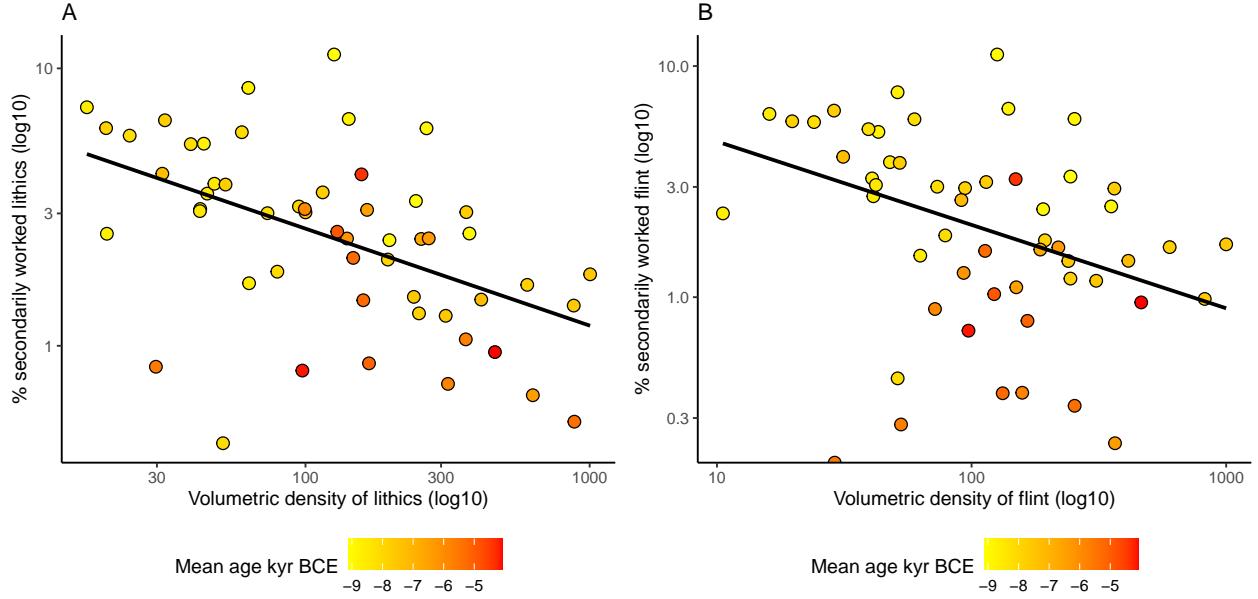


Figure 7: Relative frequency of secondarily worked lithics plotted against the volumetric density of artefacts for A) All lithics, B) Flint. The logarithm is taken to base 10 on all axes.

estimates, while ages for sites dated with reference to relative sea-level change and typology were drawn uniformly from the associated date range. This simulation was repeated 1000 times (Figure 8A). Disregarding the edge-effects at either end of the plot, the general tendency is a relatively high degree of curation among the earlier sites, followed by a marked drop around 8000 BCE. This has stabilised by around 7000 BCE and remains stable for the rest of the Mesolithic. The variation in degree of curation is also markedly higher after 8000 BCE. Figure 8B displays the result of running the same procedure on the flint data. The general pattern follows the same trajectory, but the result for some individual sites is noticeably different.

6 Discussion

The results of the CA appear to align well with previous research (e.g. Solheim 2017, with references). In the flint material the earliest sites are separated from the rest primarily based on the presence of macro tools, microburins, projectiles, and, for slightly younger sites, core fragments and blades (cf. Bjerck 2017; Breivik et al. 2018; Damlien and Solheim 2018; Fuglestvedt 2007; Jaksland and Fossum 2014). The importance of the latter two can be associated with the blade technology that is introduced with the Middle Mesolithic, characterised by blade production from conical and sub-conical cores with faceted platforms that involves the removal of core tablets and rejuvenation flakes (Damlien 2016). When it comes to the non-flint material, projectiles are to a larger extent a property of the earlier sites than later ones. The use of metarhyolite for the production of axes is present at some earlier sites in addition to the previously mentioned Nedre Hobekk 2, and the production of non-flint hatches and core axes is introduced in the Microlith Phase (Eymundsson et al. 2018; Jaksland and Fossum 2014; Reitan 2016). However, in agreement with the literature, this is evidently not as prominent a part of these assemblages.

The flint material of the later sites are to larger extent characterised by micro-blades, which corresponds to the transition to micro-blade production from handle cores (e.g. Solheim et al. 2020). A more fragmented flint material, as indicated by the relative importance of flint chips and fragments, is also a previously noted property of some later Mesolithic, as well as early Neolithic sites (e.g. Fossum 2017; Stokke and Reitan 2018). The most defining material for the later sites, however, is non-flint macro tools and associated debitage, which is dominating some of these assemblages. It was noted above that this material does not seem to impact

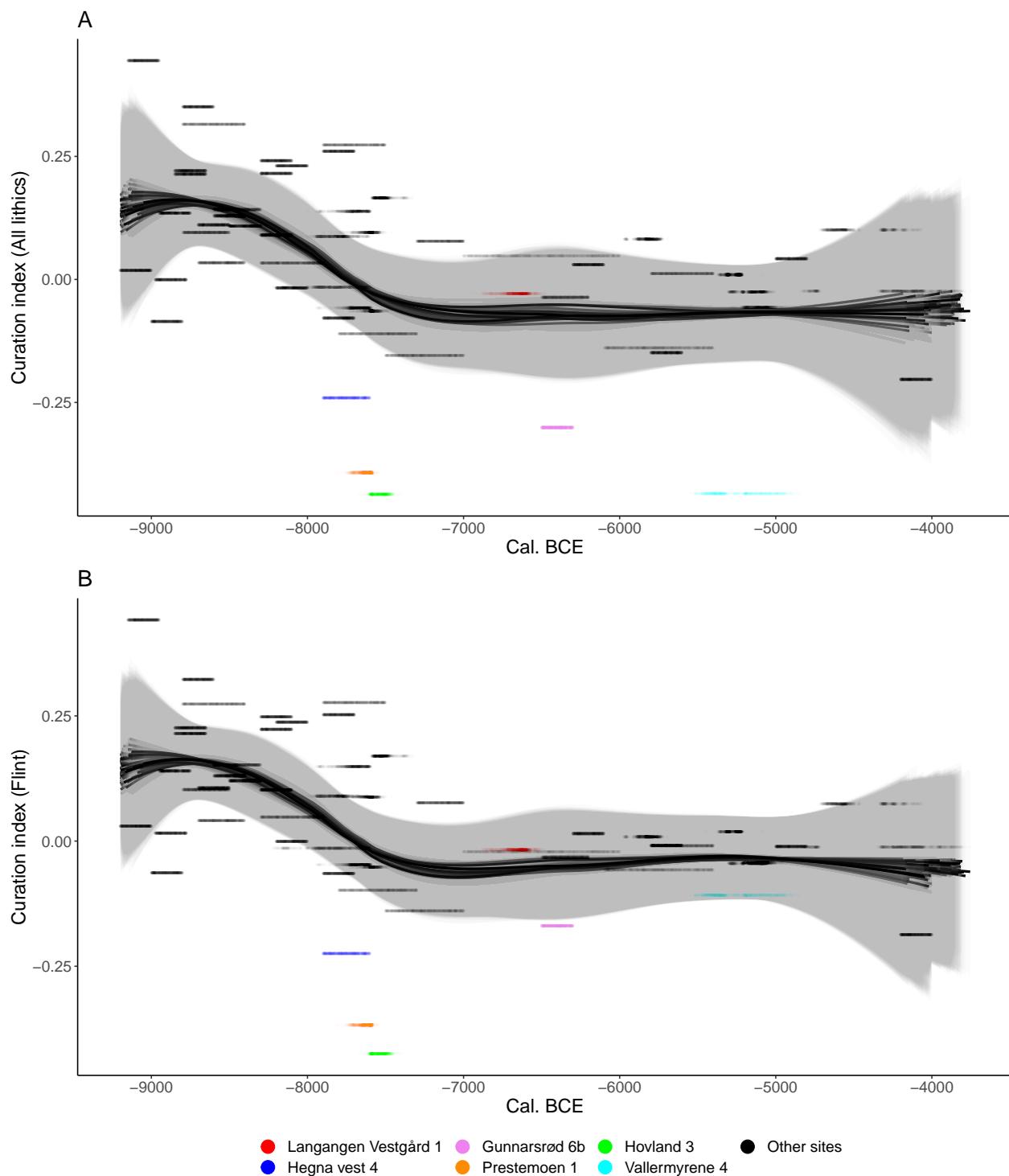


Figure 8: Temporal variation in the curation index for A) All lithics, and B) Flint. The temporal uncertainty is handled by means of a simulation approach where the site ages are drawn from their respective age determination probability density functions given in Figure 1B. A LOESS curve has been fit to the distribution for each of the 1000 simulation runs. Each simulation run is plotted with some transparency. Sites mentioned in the text are given colour.

350 the latest sites, which would indicate that specialised axe production sites disappear towards the end of the
351 Mesolithic, a notion that would be in line with previous suggestions (e.g. Glørstad 2011; Reitan 2016).

352 One implication of the fact that the employed artefact categories are so clearly capturing a temporal component
353 could be that the aggregation of artefact categories might have been overly conservative. However, it is also
354 evidently clear, in the words of Kruskal (1971:22), that ‘time is not the only dimension.’ The results of the CA
355 do most certainly correspond to more pervasive cultural change than a purely typo-chronological development
356 of artefact morphology, which is also made evident by some significant deviances from the overall pattern.
357 Unpicking and aligning these patterns with any specific behavioural and technological dimensions using the
358 coarse CA results is, however, another task entirely. This follows most clearly from the fact that for the
359 most part we do not know what individual lithic objects in the assemblages has been used for, leaving the
360 behavioural and social significance of the employed units of analysis unclear. The results of the CA can,
361 however, be used in conjunction with the part of the analysis that has attempted to get at more specific
362 behavioural dimensions to nuance or explain discrepancies in this data.

363 The curation index has relatively high values until some time before 8000 BCE, before it drops and stabilises
364 around 7000 BCE. This pattern is evident in both the flint data and when all lithics are treated in aggregate.
365 Furthermore, the increased variation in degree of curation after around 8000 BCE could indicate that these
366 sites were associated with a more varied mobility pattern. The five sites that have values on the curation
367 index below c. -0.25 could in this perspective have predominantly functioned as base-camps within a logistic
368 settlement pattern. That these assemblages reflect stays of a longer duration was suggested for all five sites
369 in the original reports (Carrasco et al. 2014; Eigeland and Fossum 2017; Persson 2014; Solheim and Olsen
370 2013), with the exception of for Vallermyrene 4, which was argued to be a specialised axe production site, not
371 necessarily associated with lower degrees of mobility (Eigeland and Fossum 2014). This highlights a possible
372 issue pertaining to raw-material variability, as the coarse non-flint material used for the production of axes
373 generally results in a relatively large amount of waste per produced tool, possibly skewing the curation index
374 when compared to assemblages dominated by flint. Referring back to the CA, the difference is most marked
375 for the sites in the later part of the Mesolithic where non-flint material become more dominating parts of the
376 assemblages. As can be seen in Figure 8B, the degree of curation is markedly higher for both Gunnarsrød
377 6b and Vallermyrene 4 when the non-flint material is excluded, although they remain more expedient than
378 that of contemporary assemblages. Thus, the degree of expediency for assemblages dominated by non-flint
379 might be somewhat exaggerated when the non-flint material is included, while its exclusion would likely lead
380 to its underestimation. One possible approach could be to weigh the curation index by the proportion of
381 non-flint material in the assemblages. This is not explored further here, however, as the overall tendencies
382 are relatively robust to this effect.

383 Another case also worth commenting on is Langangen Vestgård 1, which, on the grounds of an overall large
384 number of artefacts and the possible presence of a dwelling structure was argued to reflect a more permanent
385 site location in the original report (Melvold and Eigeland 2014). However, the relatively high value on the
386 curation index could mean that the site reflects the aggregation of stays which predominantly have been of a
387 comparable duration to those on contemporary sites, while the possible dwelling structure, if taken as an
388 indication of longer stays, could in this perspective represent a remnant from one or a few visits of longer
389 duration that constitute a smaller fraction of the use-life of the site as a whole (cf. Barton and Riel-Salvatore
390 2014).

391 While there are certainly nuances in the material that might lead one to question the applicability of the VDL
392 and RFSL measures for any individual site, the overall pattern for curation does appear relatively robust. The
393 curation index is relatively high and uniform until some time before 8000 BCE. This corresponds well with
394 the view that the Early Mesolithic is characterised by a high and uniform degree of mobility. This is followed
395 by a marked increase in expediency, which has stabilised by around 7000 BCE. Again, this corresponds well
396 with the employed chronological framework. Referring back to the demographic changes that are to take
397 place around this transition, the Microlith phase could thus represent a period where migrating people and
398 new living practices were propagating through societies in south-eastern Norway—a process that in light of
399 the curation data would have concluded around 7000 BCE.

400 The curation index then remains stable for the rest of the Mesolithic. This suggests that the transition to

401 mobility patterns traditionally ascribed to the Nøstvet Phase can indeed be traced back to the Microlith
402 Phase (cf. Solheim and Persson 2016). The continued stability of the curation index could also indicate that
403 the demographic changes suggested to take place in the Transverse Arrowhead Phase are not related to major
404 shifts in land-use and mobility patterns in the material treated here. However, it is worth highlighting the
405 strained sample size for the later parts of the Mesolithic, which could mean that the effect is simply missed.
406 As it stands, the main hypotheses resulting from the present analysis would be that settlement patterns in
407 the earliest parts of the Mesolithic were characterised by relatively high and uniform degrees of mobility,
408 which then drop before levelling off at around 7000 BCE. These then remain relatively stable throughout the
409 rest of the period, despite variation pertaining to other aspects of the lithic inventories, as evidenced by the
410 CA. Although the precise nature of this transition would require further consideration, the fall in curation
411 levels and parallel increase in variation would seem to correlate well with a transition from a predominantly
412 residential to logistical settlement system.

413 7 Conclusion

414 The results of the CA align well with results of previous research in south-eastern Norway. This would indicate
415 that in general, meaningful chronological patterning is associated with the employed artefact categories. These
416 tendencies are already well-established when it comes to the formal tool types and some debitage categories,
417 but have been given less focus in light of entire assemblages. Precisely what behavioural implication the
418 development in the occurrences of the tool and debitage categories have are less clear, but appears to follow a
419 different and more complex development over time than that of curation, as operationalised here.
420 The temporal trends associated with the curation index corresponds surprisingly well with trajectories of
421 cultural development previously suggested in the literature, and does therefore, in my view, suggest that
422 shifts in land-use and mobility patterns are the main drivers behind this empirical pattern—in line with the
423 framework of Barton et al. (2011). Another perspective would be that this is not surprising at all (cf. Kuhn
424 and Clark 2015:14), and that the previously demonstrated relevance of these measures across a wide range
425 of contexts points to their pervasive relevance for the organisation of lithic technology, and, therefore, that
426 there should be little reason to think Mesolithic south-eastern Norway should be any different. However,
427 the conclusion that these these measures apply to and appear to capture the dimensions of interest in a
428 relatively controlled empirical setting, reached by means of an exploratory analysis can only constitute a first
429 analytical step. As Elster (2015:12) has pointed out, the human mind seems to have a propensity to settle for
430 an explanation that *can* be true, as soon as this has been reached. This, however, can only constitute the
431 absolute minimum of what is required of a proposed explanation. Subsequent steps should be to probe and
432 challenge this explanatory framework, also in light of alternative hypotheses. The empirical relationship does
433 nonetheless hold great potential for large scale comparative studies in Mesolithic Scandinavia and beyond.
434 Furthermore, the temporal trends of the curation index was here simply narratively associated with the most
435 immediate chronological trends emphasised in the literature concerned with the Mesolithic of south-eastern
436 Norway. The explicit quantification does, however, offer the possibility to conduct formal comparisons with a
437 wide range of environmental, demographic and cultural dimensions across multiple scales of analysis.

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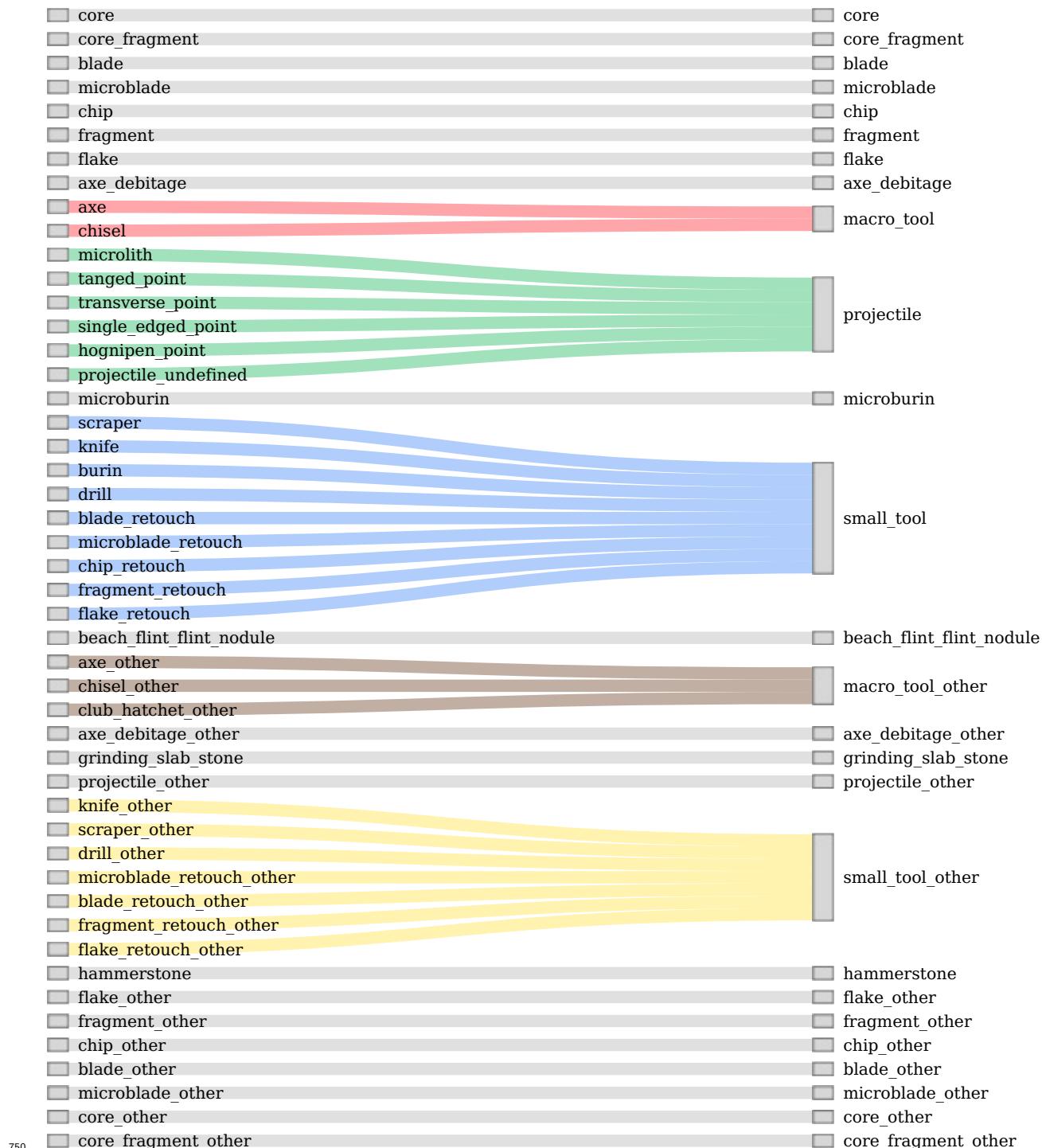
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⁷⁴⁷ 9 Supplementary material A. Radiocarbon dates.

Site name	Material	Lab code	C14-age	Error
Hovland 5	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45490	8775	52
Hovland 4	Burnt bone	Ua-45500	8747	64
Hovland 4	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45499	8630	49
Hovland 4	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45493	8568	51
Hovland 4	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45494	8526	52
Hovland 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>)	TRa-3410	8465	55
Hovland 1	Aspen/willow (<i>Populus/Salix</i>)	Ua-45675	8623	50
Hovland 1	Birch (<i>Betula</i>), resin	AAR-16884	8582	33
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45507	8609	54
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45515	8606	50
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45509	8594	48
Hovland 3	Rowan (<i>Sorbus</i>)	Ua-45508	8591	50
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45504	8584	49
Hovland 3	Rowan (<i>Sorbus</i>)	Ua-45514	8552	50
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45517	8540	51
Hovland 3	Rowan (<i>Sorbus</i>)	Ua-45505	8467	53
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45511	8465	48
Hovland 3	Rowan (<i>Sorbus</i>)	Ua-45506	8458	48
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Beta-325802	8450	40
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45516	8428	50
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45522	8398	49
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45520	8387	47
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45519	8383	47
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45503	8376	51
Hovland 3	Birch (<i>Betula</i>)	Ua-45512	8348	47
Hovland 3	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45518	8291	48
Torstvet	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	TRa-3406	8460	55
Torstvet	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	TRa-3407	8425	55
Prestemoen 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45176	8671	45
Prestemoen 1	Burnt bone	Ua-45177	8620	45
Prestemoen 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>), nutshell	Ua-45178	8593	46
Langangen Vestgård 1	Burnt bone	TRa-1994	7785	40
Langangen Vestgård 1	Burnt bone	TRa-1995	7760	40
Langangen Vestgård 1	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	TRa-2243	7780	70
Langangen Vestgård 1	Birch/rowan (<i>Betula/Sorbus</i>)	TRa-4114	7870	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>)	TRa-4115	7740	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>)	TRa-4116	7800	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	TRa-4117	8030	55
Langangen Vestgård 1	Willow (<i>Salix</i>)	TRa-4118	8005	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Birch/hazel (<i>Betula/Corylus</i>)	TRa-4119	7850	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Hazel (<i>Corylus</i>)	TRa-4120	7875	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Birch/willow (<i>Betula/Salix</i>)	TRa-4121	7945	45
Langangen Vestgård 1	Burnt bone	TRa-4122	7795	40
Langangen Vestgård 1	Burnt bone	TRa-4123	7745	35
Vallermyrene 4	Burnt bone	Ua-45169	6489	50
Vallermyrene 4	Burnt bone	Ua-45170	6381	37
Vallermyrene 4	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	Ua-45172	6197	40
Vallermyrene 4	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	Ua-45171	6067	41
Vallermyrene 1	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	Ua-45182	5770	35
Vallermyrene 1	Pine (<i>Pinus</i>)	Ua-45181	5748	35

Vallermyrene 1	Birch (Betula)	Ua-45180	5373	34
Langangen Vestgård 3	Pine (Pinus)	TRa-2246	5400	55
Langangen Vestgård 3	Pine (Pinus)	TRa-2247	5325	50
Langangen Vestgård 3	Pine (Pinus)	TRa-2248	5910	10
Langangen Vestgård 3	Pine (Pinus)	TRa-4126	5095	40
Langangen Vestgård 3	Birch (Betula)	TRa-2249	5325	45
Langangen Vestgård 3	Birch (Betula)	TRa-2250	5325	50
Gunnarsrød 4	Birch (Betula)	UBA-19159	6941	36
Hegna vest 2	Pine (Pinus)	Ua-50497	8708	38
Hegna vest 1	Aspen/willow (Populus/Salix)	Ua-50485	8788	34
Hegna vest 1	Willow (Salix)	Ua-51462	8732	40
Hegna vest 3	Aspen/willow (Populus/Salix)	Ua-51471	8679	39
Stokke/Polland 8	Birch (Betula)	Ua-51840	6215	35
Hegna øst 2	Pine (Pinus)	Ua-50501	6318	26
Stokke/Polland 5	Pomoideae (Malinae)	Ua-48257	6098	40
Stokke/Polland 5	Hazel (Corylus)	Ua-48258	6177	42
Stokke/Polland 5	Alder (Alnus)	Ua-50501	6196	40

748 10 Supplementary material B. Aggregation of variables for the
 749 correspondence analysis.



750