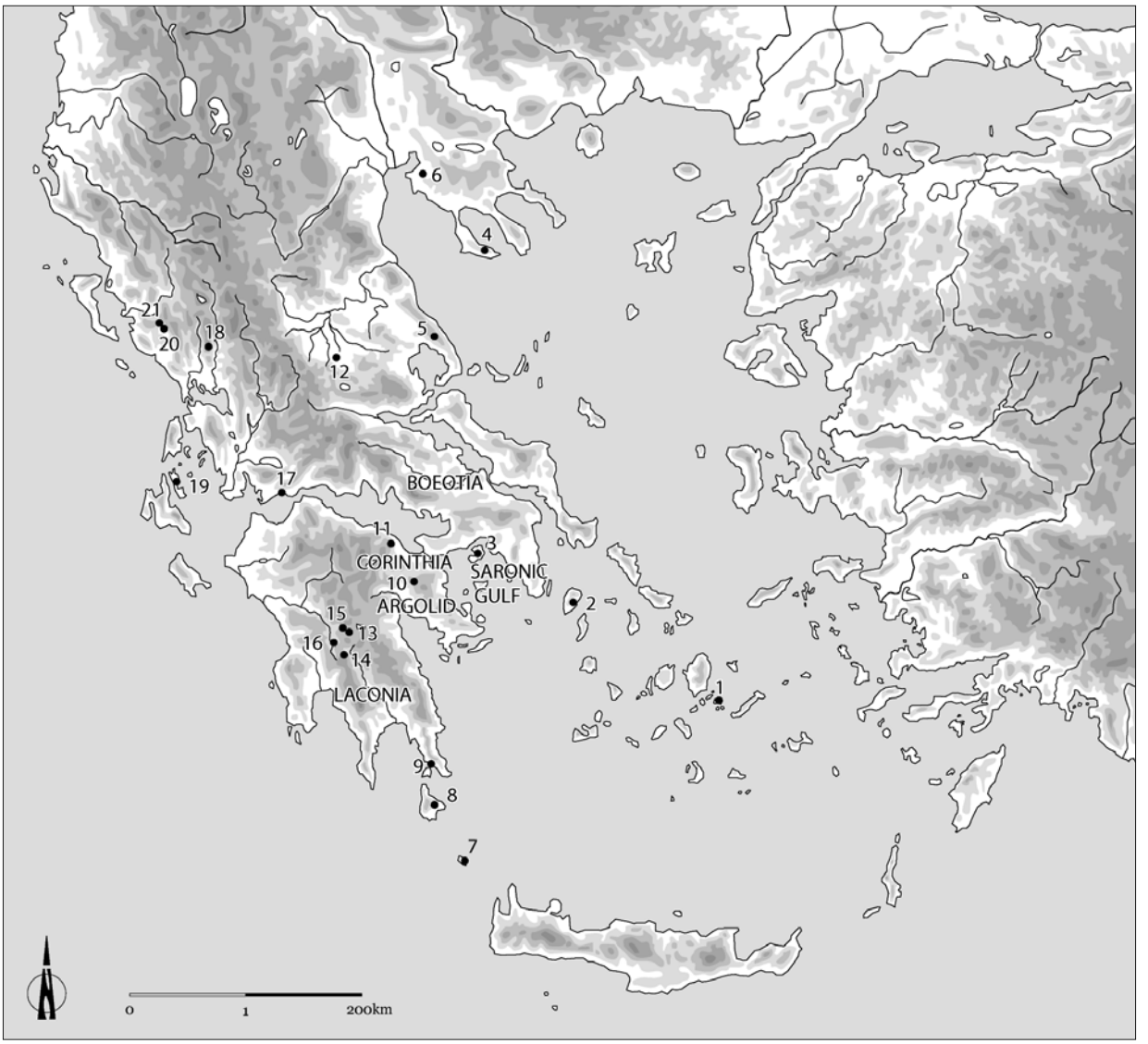
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ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE 2013–2014

Rural sites in Roman Greece

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Map 8. Map of sites in Greece referred to in the text. © BSA.
(1) Keros; (2) Kea; (3) Salamis; (4) Paliouri, Kanistro; (5) Pelion; (6) Ano Scholari; (7) Antikythera; (8) Kythera; (9) Pavlopetri; (10) Berbati valley; (11) Sikyon; (12) Koutroulou Magoula; (13) Manari; (14) Asea; (15) Petrina; (16) Megalopolis; (17) Naupaktos; (18) Chalikia; (19) Ithaca; (20) Sternari; (21) Paramythia.

> [W]hile pretending to throw some light upon classical authors by careful observation of the manners of the present day, romantic travellers succeeded in fact in accommodating reality to their dreams ... by creating for themselves and for their readers carefully edited portraits of modern Greece that transformed the present into the living image of the past (Saïd 2005: 291).

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Thirty years ago archaeological field survey promised to reshape radically our understanding of the countryside (Keller and Rupp 1983: 1–5). Traditional archaeological approaches to cities and monuments were increasingly seen to be extensions of textual research, and research on the rural landscape was envisaged as a way to access the other side of the traditional urban-rural dichotomy (though see the comments in Alcock 2007: 671–72). Some scholars estimated that, in the Classical period, the vast majority of Greek poleis had populations of less than 3,000 and territories no more than a few hours' walk from the urban core. Given that, they asked, does it make sense to divide elements of Greek life into 'city' and 'country'? In a sense, the study of landscapes was seen as a way to redress perceived imbalances between this urban-rural division and the picture painted by the ancient sources of Roman Greece as a pale reflection of its Classical brilliance. In the years since, landscape studies have grown to include much more than archaeological field survey, but this tension between textual and archaeological narratives remains at the heart of understandings of rural Roman Greece.

Classical Archaeology, as a discipline, is both blessed and cursed with a preponderance of evidence beyond the material, and this has shaped archaeological interpretation. The written records of (largely elite) Greeks and Romans provide a glimpse into the behavioural and cultural practices of these places, and, of course, many of those behaviours and practices are what have helped shape the formation of the archaeological record. These texts lie at the heart of what defines Classical archaeology – materially, archaeologists are in a constant dialogue with these sources, accepting, modifying or rejecting the vision of culture portrayed within (Cherry *et al*. 1991b; Hall 2014).

Setting aside the much larger debate regarding the relationship between archaeology and text (on this debate, see Sauer 2004), it is a generally accepted truism that the ancient sources have presented interpretative problems for the understanding of **rural landscapes** in Roman Greece. The wide variety of authors – in terms of genre, location and chronology – gives the false impression that the rural landscape was a concern of these authors. It was not. Most authors discuss the countryside as an aside, something to be traversed on the way to a more significant historical or cultural locale, or employ it as a metaphor (Alcock and Rempel 2006; Kronenberg 2009). Despite the variety in period and genre, the common metaphor that is deployed throughout these works is that Greece is a pale shadow of what it was. The text that forms the foundation of this view dates from the mid second century BC and comes from Polybius:

> In our time the whole of Greece has been subject to a low birth rate and a general decrease of the population, owing to which cities have become deserted and the land has ceased to yield fruit, although there have neither been continuous wars nor epidemics (36.17.5–6).

Early studies of the rural countryside generally agreed with this picture of decline (Runnels and van Andel 1987; Bintliff and Snodgrass 1988). Though textual commentaries are apt to point out that Polybius was probably referring to a localized phenomenon affecting the elite around his native Megalopolis (**ID2427**), this broad picture of **decline and depopulation** lingers in the popular imagination (ancient and modern). Indeed, his is a theme picked up by numerous subsequent authors: both Plutarch (*De defectu oraculorum* 413F–414A) and Strabo (late first century BC to early first century AD) employ the trope, with the latter famously saying of Polybius' own Megalopolis, 'the Great City is a great desert' (8.8.1).

The trope becomes problematic in that the state of the rural landscape becomes a metaphor for the decline in moral character among the citizen body in Greece as a whole (Dio Chrysostom *Oration* 33.25: late first century to early second century AD). Late Republican and Early Imperial Roman sources as varied as Cicero, Ovid and Seneca also comment on the desolation of the land. Sulpicius' letter to Cicero in 45 BC famously states: 'Behind me was Aegina, before me Megara, on my right Piraeus, on my left Corinth, towns at one time flourishing, now lying prostrate and demolished before one's own eyes' (Cicero *Ad Fam.* 4.5.4). Sulpicius, it should be noted, was visiting Greece 40 years after Sulla's siege of Athens and prior to the refoundation of Corinth as a Roman colony. Still, his vision of *urban* decline has been taken to refer to the countryside as a whole.

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In short, the rural Greece of the Roman period had to contend with the clash between the **landscapes of the imagination** and the **actual physical landscapes** that literary elites encountered. The cultural impact of Greece's history necessarily conditioned later responses to the landscape; in many ways, Roman-period Greece could never measure up to its historic forebears. This cycle of engagement – of experiencing the landscapes of Greece first in literature and then in person – would shape responses to those physical landscape for centuries. Pausanias, the second-century AD topographer credited with the first 'travel guide' to Greece, famously decided essentially to ignore his contemporary Roman Greece in order to focus on its Classical and Hellenistic past (Alcock 1996; Hutton 2005).

> … [F]rom the beginning my account was intended to select the most noteworthy from the many traditions current everywhere that are not worth recording. This was a well-considered plan and I shall not deviate from it (Pausanias 3.11.1).

This was an attitude shared by the first antiquarian visitors to Greece in the late 18th and early 19th centuries:

> A traveller must not expect to derive any information whatever from the generality of Greeks upon the antiquities of their country, but must extricate himself as well he can, from the dark mazes of conjecture and uncertainty, by the topographical light of Pausanias ... (Dodwell 1819: 403–04).

This is significant because these antiquarian travellers helped shape the early missions of the foreign archaeological schools, and it is the foreign archaeological schools who continue to shape so much of the discourse surrounding rural landscapes in Greece (Stewart 2013a). This Classical inheritance lies at the heart of investigations of the rural Roman landscape in Greece, consciously or otherwise. Archaeological studies that focused specifically on the rural countryside were initially envisaged as a corrective to this distorting urban literary lens. The result has been both a much more nuanced understanding of the rural landscape over time and a more schizophrenic relationship to traditional interpretations of literary landscapes.

This short survey of the *problématique* is necessary because, in order to understand the state of contemporary rural studies of Roman Greece, it is necessary to understand the intellectual challenges that landscape archaeologists have faced in the last decades. Studying the landscape means encountering **dissonance**. The landscape itself is an ephemeral thing: seemingly static but constantly in motion; appearing timeless but subject to radical morphological change. Though walking through a Greek landscape frequently feels like you are stepping through history, it is not the same landscape as that traversed by the inhabitants of Roman Greece. Even the coastline is different. The predominant material evidence itself is also unusual in archaeological terms: a partial surface reflection of subsurface remains that appear as a smear across the landscape, lacking depth, temporality and only crudely associated spatially. Most of what is recovered cannot be dated, only counted (for a summary of issues in landscape archaeology, see Stewart 2013b: 6–14). Unlike urban locales, the places where archaeological evidence exists are not even necessarily the foci of the most significant ancient behaviours – most of our evidence relates to agricultural production, storage and transport, yet these are 'end-point' evidence of behaviours that are focused on fields of crops or flocks of animals (Goodchild 2007: 100–07). By the same token, our understanding of exactly what those behaviours were comes largely from close readings of ancient sources (literary and visual) and ethnography (Gallant 1991; Kron 2000).

This dissonance in the archaeological landscapes of Roman Greece occurs because the different types of evidence do not neatly align, as in the persistent issue of periodization. The chronologies provided by the textual sources and the archaeological material do not map directly on to each other. The chronological boundaries of 'Roman' Greece are indistinct, beginning at times with the Macedonian conquests of Aemilius Paullus (167 BC), the Mummian destruction of Corinth (146 BC), Sulla's siege of Athens (86 BC) or the creation of the province of Achaea (*ca*. 27 BC). The strong textual narrative of invasion and

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destruction often leads scholars to map archaeological finds onto known events. A good example can be seen in the recent excavation of a farmhouse on the plain of Elaia (**Fig. 123**; **ID4074**). Dump material was uncovered east of the main building, containing large amounts of Late Classical and Hellenistic pottery, a relief skyphos depicting a male head (dated *ca*. 175–146 BC) and bronze coins of the Epirote League. Given evidence of burning over much of the excavated area, the excavators decided that the building represented a farmhouse destroyed in the Roman sack of 167 BC, but must this be the cause of a fire in a farmhouse?



123. Plain of Elaia: Site 3, farmhouse. © Ministry of Culture and Sport: 8th EPCA.

Most instances of the trope of depopulation and decline come from the period bookended by Mummius' campaign and Augustus' victory at Actium, a 100-year period which is notoriously difficult to untangle materially in the landscape. Archaeological projects typically focus their analyses on broad categories of Early, Middle and Late Roman, but there are no commonly accepted boundaries between these periods (or any period; see table 1).

This disjuncture is significant because it radically affects how we build the narrative of Roman Greece. Periodization is but one example of long-standing comparative problems between regions of Roman Greece that range from ceramic typologies and local histories to demography and soil morphology (Alcock and Cherry 2004). Even the circumstances behind the annexation of areas of Roman Greece vary markedly in time and space. One of the most significant developments of the last decade has been the recognition that regionality lies at the heart of our understandings of Roman Greece – there is no single narrative; dissonance is not the result of a lack of harmony within one song, but rather due to the competing songs from the past all sounding at once.

Survey	*Archaic*	*Classical*	*Hellenistic*			*Roman*		
			Early	*Middle*	*Late*	*Early*	*Middle*	*Late*
Laconia	700–450	450–300	300–200	200–100	100–31	31 BC – AD 200	200–400	400–600
Methana	600–480	480–323	323–100			100 BC –AD 100	100–300	300–600
Berbati-Limnes	600–500	500–300	300–31			31 BC – AD 150	150–300	300–600
Asea Valley	600–31					31 BC – AD 150	150–300	300–600
Southern Argolid	700–480	480–338	350–250	250–50		50 BC – AD 200	200–400	400–650
PRAP	700–480	480–323	323–31			31 BC – AD 400	–	400–700
Antikythera	600–500	500–325	325–0			0–200	200–350	350–650
Boeotia	600–500	500–325	325–0			0–400	200–400	400–650
Eastern Korinthia	700–480	480–323	323–31			31 BC – AD 250	–	250–700

Table 1. Periodization within select archaeological survey projects, modified from Stewart 2013b.

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Rural areas are normally defined in opposition to urban areas – as part of a traditional dichotomy between city and territory. Rural areas are, however, composed of a variety of settlements ranging from elite villa residences to villages, hamlets, isolated farmsteads, cemeteries and sanctuaries. The rural countryside is also the focus of the most basic and prevalent of economic activities in the ancient world: agriculture. The absence of archaeological material in the countryside does not necessarily equal an absence of past human behaviour. There is also a tendency, within the fields of classics and ancient history more so than in archaeology, to treat rural populations or spaces as extensions of the urban – to see in rural activities a continuation of urban existence – yet this does not need to be so (Woolf 1994; Sanders 2004). While there is an economic hierarchy of interdependent settlement types supporting each other within the landscape, from farmstead to polis, this hierarchy does not need to translate into simple (or single) developmental narratives that see the farmer focused on supplying the city and the city keen to include the farmer in its suite of cultural behaviours.

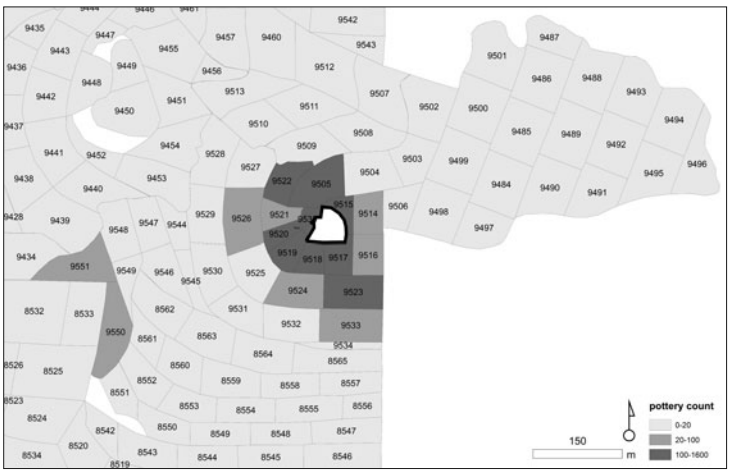
The acknowledgement of dissonance, in other words, shows as a different vision of the rural landscape, one that can be reflective of broader Mediterranean trends, while also being insular and local. Methods and approaches for understanding the state of rural landscapes in the past are constantly evolving. A review of this sort is not the venue for a reconstructed narrative of the varying rural Roman countrysides of Greece – instead, I shall focus on identifying key developments and challenges for the study of the rural landscapes of Greece in the Roman period.

Key developments: method

The key methodology for accessing landscape history remains pedestrian field survey, and, despite the often mind-numbing monotony of traversing Greek landscapes for eight hours a day for upwards of six weeks in summer, it remains unparalleled in terms of the quality and quantity of information it produces relating to ancient activity in the countryside. Unlike the survey of Keller and Rupp's days (1983), however, techniques and methodologies have improved significantly over the last decade. Foremost amongst Greek survey theorists is probably John Bintliff, whose output remains prolific (24 articles and reviews and one monograph since 2012 alone). Bintliff's output has arguably shaped both the nature and scope of the discourse regarding survey archaeology in Greece for decades, especially in regard to artefact sampling, size of collection unit and depth of artefact study (for example, Bintliff 2013). In other words, his research grapples with the related issues of what to collect, how much of it and how to make sense of it once you have it.

Bintliff's work is emblematic of broader trends within survey archaeology that transcend geographic focus (the majority of survey theorists work on projects in Italy or the northwestern Roman provinces). Within Greece, four broad trends in landscape studies can be perceived: a challenging of the traditional focus on ceramic typology; the refinement of collection strategies, including resurvey; studies across landscape zones; and, increasing interdisciplinarity.

The movement away from the 'tyranny of the pot typology' and the incorporation of other data types within the analysis are important intellectual shifts – for example, in the increasing use of stratigraphic sampling to support the study of surface material (as at Sikyon: **ID1422**) and the combination of different sampling strategies in order to tease out site specifics (as in the Kythera Island Project Site 111: **Fig. 124**; **ID1946**). For the landscapes of rural Greece, the archaeological data



124. Kythera Island Project: tract map of the Agios Georgios mountain, showing the high density of pottery (dark) at the peak in contrast to the low density (light) on the lower slopes. © BSA, Kythera Island Project.

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take several forms: terraces, field boundaries, agricultural/industrial equipment (such as presses, mortaria or kilns), scattered architecture and, most significantly and in the greatest proportion, ceramics (Pettegrew 2007). Ceramics are essentially indestructible – they fragment into smaller and smaller pieces, but they are always there. The vast majority of what is recorded on the surface is not datable, ensuring that most analyses remain at the level of functional use: fineware, tableware, coarseware and/or storage and transport vessels (Witcher 2012: 11–14). In short, this means that known pottery typologies – largely based on imported finewares – have a disproportionate impact on the interpretation of rural sites. The interpretative emphasis has been on identifying specific ceramic wares, in order to aid dating of predominant phases within any one artefact scatter.

This is the problematic nature of what survey recovers, and it is a well-trodden issue within the survey literature. Be that as it may, it is still the case that the small proportion of identifiable and datable ceramics serves to categorize entire landscapes; but several recent projects – notably the Eastern Korinthia (**ID907**, *cf*. **ID1881**) and Antikythera (**ID134**) projects – have attempted to move beyond the issue through the broader application of 'site-less' surveying. Whereas previous projects have identified dense artefact scatters as 'sites' (or close semantic relatives), and therefore focused their efforts on the peaks of human activity, the site-less survey takes the entire landscape as one 'site' and seeks to record both the peaks and troughs of artefact density as part of a continuum of human interaction with the landscape.

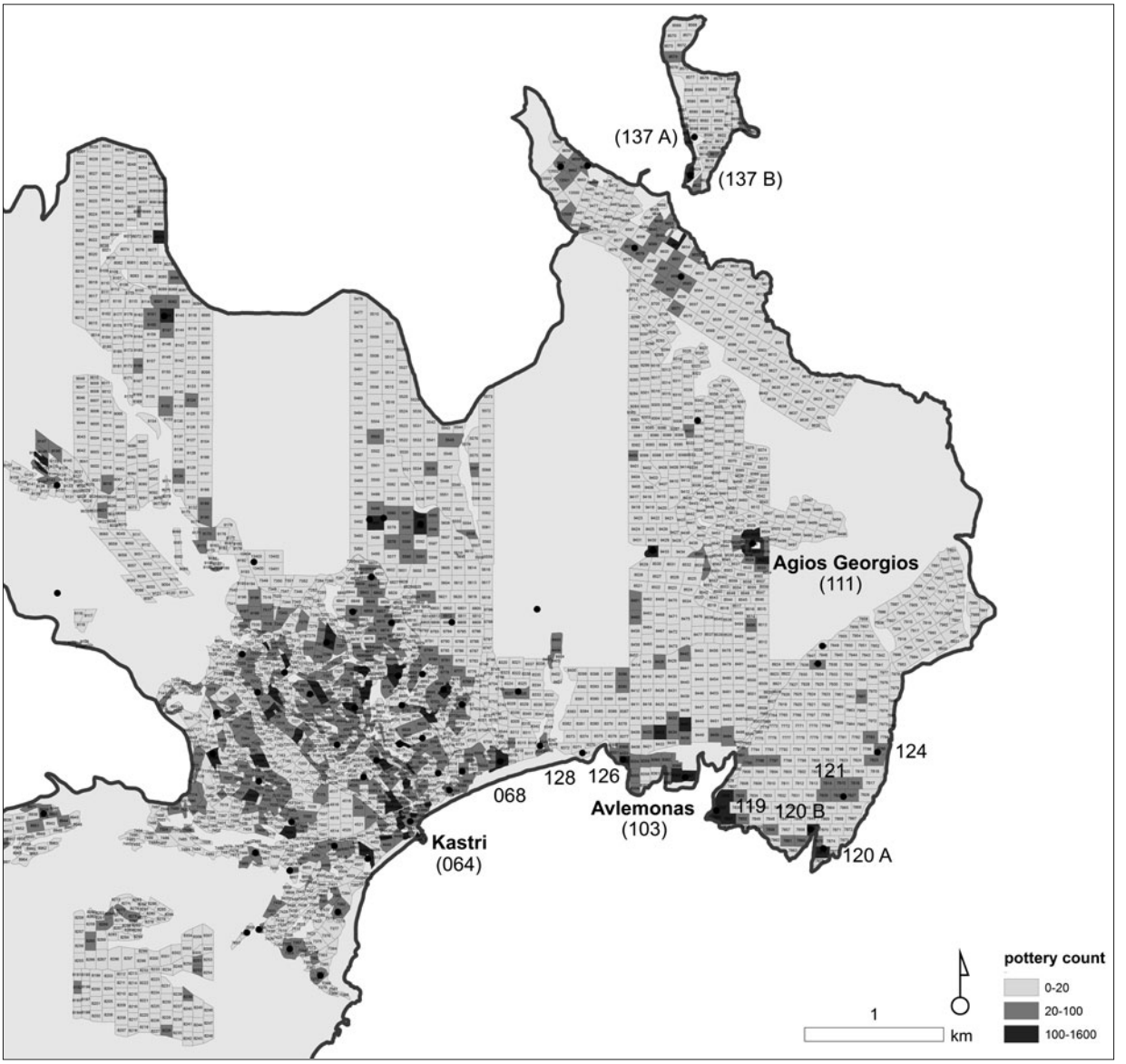
As the Antikythera surveyors have pointed out, the widespread increase of Late Roman rural settlements, in comparison with the Early Roman period, may partly reflect differences in the visibility of the ceramic artefacts and not necessarily the demographic reality, a point echoed by the neighbouring Kythera Island Project (**Fig. 125**; **ID1946**). Shifting the interpretative focus away from ceramic wares is an important step in creating a more rounded view of the relationship between people and places.

The refinement and experimentation of collection strategies, including the increased use of resurvey (as in the Kea Archaeological Research Survey, discussed in more detail below: **ID4216**, **ID3258**), are welcome methodological developments. Not unrelated to the preceding trend, a greater flexibility in collection strategies means that surveyors can be more reactive to different landscape and environmental conditions, rather than rigidly imposing statistical models on a capricious landscape. A good example of this can be seen in the move away from thinking of survey as 'non-destructive' (though this is far from universal: see Corsi *et al*. 2013). It has been said that archaeology is the only type of anthropology that kills its informants (Flannery 1982: 275), meaning that in the process of recovering our data we our destroying contextual information. This is easily understood for excavation, where successive layers need to be removed in order to access the chronological depth of human activity, but for a long time survey was seen as non-destructive (or its close cousin, 'non-invasive'). Of course, if a survey is collecting material or altering its appearance on the surface, it is destructive and invasive – and while it may not be killing the informants, it is giving them a thoroughly good kicking.

Survey has long struggled with justifying the nature of the surface remains and its relationship to subsurface material. The expectation is that what is found on the surface represents deeper archaeological deposits that have been churned up by modern agricultural activity or natural processes of soil movement caused by animals, insects, plants or climate. But the question of just how representative these surface remains are remains a tricky question – and attempts to 'test' hypotheses based on surface material have not been resounding successes (as in the Laconia Rural Sites Project: Cavanagh *et al*. 2005). This is why continued experimentation in collection strategies – ranging from vacuuming all the artefacts within a set area (as at Sikyon) or sampling specific targets within broader survey units (as in Boeotia) or processing everything in the field and not collecting it (as in the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey) – is so necessary. Given the wide range of geomorphology and local environmental and economic histories within Greece, there is likely no single answer to the question of the surface/subsurface relationship.

Within these varied areas, however, the use of resurvey can help to lend validity to specific local results, and can help archaeologists to judge the impact of the relatively recent spread of intensive farming techniques within Greece (increased mechanization since 1981 has more than doubled the depth of the plough-zone, meaning that previously undisturbed archaeological strata are being churned up more

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125. Kythera Island Project: tract map of the Kastri-Avlemonas-Diakofti area, showing original ceramic densities and subsequently defined sites. © BSA, Kythera Island Project.

regularly). Resurvey is what it sounds like – revisiting a previously explored area and surveying it again – and has been variously advocated within specific projects: notably in Boeotia (Bintliff 2000) and Laconia (Cavanagh *et al*. 2005).

The Kea Archaeological Research Survey (**ID4216**, **ID3258**) is the first project in Greece that is specifically formulated as a resurvey of a previously-surveyed area: northwest Kea (ancient Keos), previously studied in the early 1980s (Cherry *et al*. 1991a). A critique of that original project was that the processualist (that is, hypothesis-led, scientifically-framed) school of archaeological theory from which it developed saw humans in the landscape as 'rational actors', with settlements located according to the inhabitants' needs for resources (Forbes 2007: 17–18). Economically 'irrational' sites (such as shrines or churches) received short shrift, and populations were treated as if they belonged to the material world derived from culture, rather than the natural world, which was viewed as a separate entity.

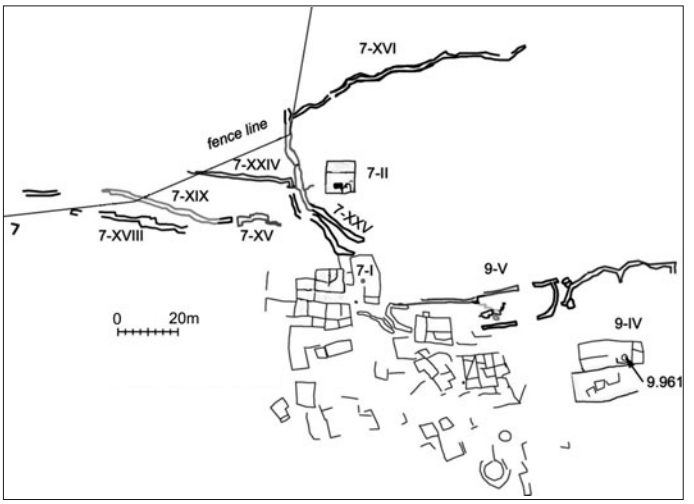
The resurvey of Kea will go some way to redressing this perceived imbalance, and will help to test the results of the original survey. Not only has survey methodology progressed in the intervening decades,

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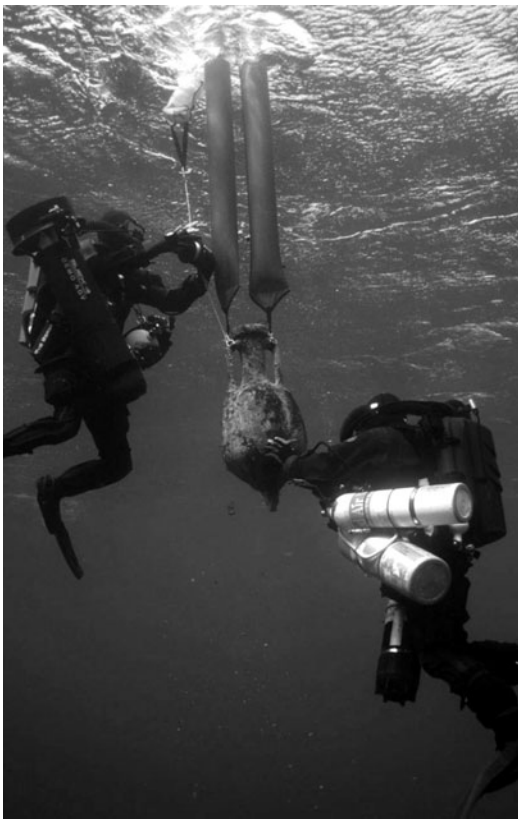
but so too has archaeological theory – there are fewer dyed-in-the-wool processualists now, and most archaeologists would claim that humans do not act outside of natural systems and are not always 'rational' in economic terms. The resurvey will also help to assess the impact of the modern inhabitants of Kea on the island's archaeological record and will, I think, set off a broader wave of resurvey in Greece as a whole.

There is a renewed focus on interaction across different landscape zones, as in the case of the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago Survey (**ID2620**). Another welcome trend within landscape studies is the desire to capture different types of landscapes within a single project. Some survey projects have traversed different types of landscapes within their study areas previously – as in the Methana Survey Project, which went from coast to upland valley – but what makes the Inner Ionian project so interesting is its explicit focus on the relationship between the Archipelago, Aetoloacarnania and Leukas, combining archaeological, palaeogeographical, historical and anthropological research.

A similar intersection can be seen in the close cooperation between the Saronic Harbours Archaeological Research Project (with arguably the best acronym in Greek archaeology) (**ID1887**, **ID910**) and the Eastern Korinthia Archaeological Survey. Not only have the two projects shared staff members and data (**ID250**), but the Saronic Harbours project collected shell and marine artefacts, capturing both land and maritime activities. Geological and geomorphological research focused on problems of erosion and sediment movement, hydrology and coastline change over time. Initial results are focused on the Bronze Age, but suggest that standing Mycenaean remains were reused in the Roman period, largely for industry (**Fig. 126**). To me, the most exciting development is the extension of archaeological landscape research from inland Corinthia out to the coastal shelf (a situation not dissimilar to that at submerged Pavlopetri: **ID1893**, **ID2548**). Potential collaboration can also be seen at offshore Antikythera (**ID2909**) in work undertaken by the EMA in collaboration with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (**Fig. 127**). The close proximity of the island survey with the underwater study of wrecks promises to highlight the long-term interplay between land and sea in this treacherous part of the Mediterranean.



126. Saronic Harbours Archaeological Research Project, Korphos-Kalamianos: sectors 7 and 9, showing fortification walls and Late Roman reuse in sector 9. © ASCSA.

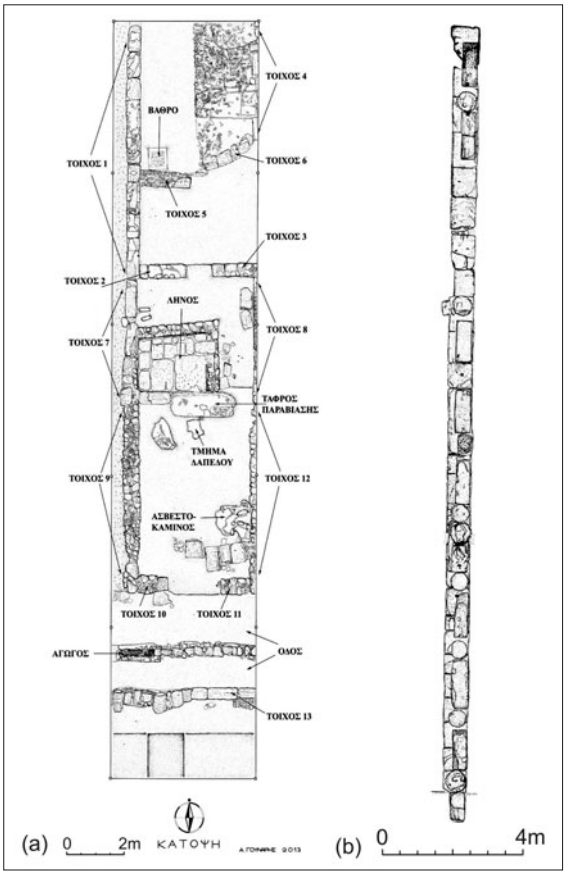


127. Antikythera wreck: raising amphorae. © Ministry of Culture and Sport: EMA.

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Finally, interdisciplinarity is becoming the new *status quo*. As several of the previous trends suggest, understanding the rural countryside is fast becoming a necessarily interdisciplinary endeavour, drawing on a wide range of expertise. Archaeological field survey is increasingly being supported by geomorphological studies, geophysical research, ethnography and even excavation.

In some cases excavation is supplanting survey – a situation that would have horrified the processualist survey pioneers of the late 1970s and early 1980s. With the conclusion of the Sikyon Survey Project, Yannis Lolos (ASA) has moved on to excavation within the Hellenistic and Roman agora of the urban site (**ID4429**), uncovering Late Roman agricultural processing equipment (**Fig. 128**). Key excavations of rural villas and industrial sites have also highlighted the differences in the nature and quality of information gleaned from the two techniques: agricultural complexes have been excavated at Salamis (**ID2638**) and at Naupaktos (at the gipedo (**ID2388**); on the Naupaktos-Antirrion road (**ID4268**); and at Palaiopanagia (**Fig. 129**; **ID4269**)). This last site has evidence of wine production, in the form of two vats and grape seeds. The walls of the building and cisterns were of local fieldstones, river pebbles and fragments of brick, while the almost complete absence of tiles may indicate that the building was roofed with perishable material. Other agricultural complexes have been uncovered at Manari in Arcadia (Late Roman; **ID2425**), at two sites near Petrina in Arcadia (Agia Irini near Velona and Monastiriako, rema Ambelakiou, second to fourth and third to fourth century AD respectively; **ID2431**) and at Ano Scholari (central Macedonia; **ID4143**).



128. Sikyon: (a) part of a Late Roman settlement south of the stoa; (b) stylobate. © ASA.



129. Naupaktos, Palaiopanagia: pair of wine presses and vats. © Ministry of Culture and Sport: 36th EPCA.

Despite these developments, the fact remains that survey is the only method to provide long-term and spatially widespread evidence for landscape use. The only way to understand properly that evidence, however, is to place it within as wide an intellectual context as possible, including the relationship of modern inhabitants to any antiquities. I find the broader application of ethnographic studies to be especially exciting, particularly when the traditional context of the activities of the foreign schools is considered. The Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago Survey and the Keros Island Survey (**ID4284**) have both incorporated ethnoarchaeological work into their programme designs. The Sikyon Survey Project had an anthropological component, as did the Pelion Cave Project (**ID457**) and the work undertaken in Koutroulou Magoula (**ID1889**). These latter two projects are not Roman in focus, but the methodological development is encouraging, if challenging (more on this below).

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Key developments: analysis

The methodological advances outlined above have been mirrored by interpretative and analytical changes as well. New research questions regarding material culture, the nature of production and its attendant technologies, including the connectedness of even small-scale settlements, are reshaping our understandings of the rural landscape in the Roman period. It is becoming clear that the there is no one over-arching narrative for Roman-period Greece and that there is a patchwork of multi-faceted and varying local histories. Some areas, like the north and west of the Peloponnese, evince increasing economic contacts with Roman Italy over the Early and Middle Roman periods, while others – like parts of Boeotia and central Epirus – have a more inward focus, with fewer recognizable Roman connections. Neither pattern corresponds to the traditional trope of 'boom and bust' Roman Greece. It's also becoming increasingly clear that such sweeping generalizations are more open to challenge and that, as the scale and depth of study increases, the more complicated the picture becomes.

For example, the importation of cookwares to Middle and Late Roman Kastri on Kythera and the lack of local production (Slane and Kiriatzi 2014) is contrary to what would be expected in a settlement with a substantial local history. Cookwares are normally the wares that are most resistant to external change and most likely to have local, pre-existing ceramic traditions. Kastri is likely to have served as the main harbour town of the island, and so it is not unusual to see a higher proportion of imports in its archaeological record, but the lack of locally-produced ceramics is surprising. Kythera is also important as its place in broader Mediterranean networks means that the island has long been a stepping-stone (or a barrier) for maritime movement, especially between the Peloponnese and Crete. Furthermore, recent work focused on Kastri serves as a prime example of the potential of subsequent restudy and the incorporation of legacy data to contemporary archaeological understandings – the combination of the stratigraphically-excavated pottery from the 1960s excavations of Nicolas Coldstream and George Huxley (Coldstream and Huxley 1973) with the data generated by the survey project of the early 2000s is producing a nuanced local history that has ramifications for both the history of the southern Peloponnese and northern Crete.

A similarly nuanced study can be seen in relation to the island of Ithaca in the Roman period (*cf.* **ID2598**). Areti Pentedeka and colleagues (2014) have studied the presence of imports from Asia Minor on the island, comparing them to locally-produced wares in a study that manages to balance the identification of imports with local considerations, providing a refreshingly equitable understanding of the nature of local ceramic assemblages that highlights the complex interplay between local adaptability, sometimes far-flung trade connections and the influence of larger neighbours.

Many other studies are now incorporating a much more directed materials analysis into their research designs, expanding our understandings of the interplay between form and place of production and adding to the complexity of our picture of the ancient rural economy. The BSA in particular has long been at the forefront of materials analyses in ceramic studies (a glance at the acknowledgements of the papers in the recent *Late Roman Coarse Wares* volume highlights this: Poulou-Papadimitriou *et al*. 2014), and the increasing use of such analyses on material from rural sites is showcasing the extent to which locally-produced materials can be influenced by wide-ranging 'fashions' in ceramic production. Advances in archaeobotanical studies are also adding to our understandings of the relationships between people and plants, as in the work of Alexandra Livarda (Nottingham), which moves across periods (and between sites) to examine the social complexity of exotic plants (Livarda 2013). Indeed, Livarda's own chapter in this edition of *AG* is a landmark review of the development of the discipline. The vast majority of such studies in Greece are focused on prehistory, but several interesting forays into plant-specific studies have implications for understanding, for example, the role of the olive in Roman-period rural society (Margaritis and Jones 2008; Kouli 2012).

This broadening base of archaeological data relating to the countryside, its rich depth of description and a renewed focus on questioning old assumptions, means that several scholars are revisiting the nature of the villa economy for several areas of Greece (for example, Boeotia: Bintliff *et al*. 2007: 160; Peloponnese: Rizakis and Touratsoglou 2013). 'Villa', as a category, is becoming increasingly broad –

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encompassing structures that are both well-built and rudely constructed, some with fine dressed stones, others with stone rubble and mud-brick or incorporating spolia (a problem discussed below, under 'Challenges'). Location within the landscape is also varied – they may be situated near main roads, along the banks of rivers or near the shores of lakes, in many cases (for example, the maritime villa at Paliouri, Kanistro: **ID4147**). These rural villas also have a mix of productive installations; sometimes they have wine or olive presses (or both), sometimes open air vats, sometimes large kilns (Chalikia in Epirus: **Fig. 130**; **ID2514**; Paramythia, rescue excavation: **ID2525**). Some of these industrial installations are constructed on a large scale (Sternari in Epirus: **Fig. 131**; **ID4238**); others seem to have been much more *ad hoc* or haphazard. Storage provision follows the same pattern, which is to say, no clear pattern is evident in structures identified as villas. Some of these villa foundations begin in the Early Roman period and persist until Late Antiquity, others are remarkably short-lived. There is, in essence, no single story of the Roman-period villa in Greece.



130. Chalikia: mosaic floor of a Roman villa. © Ministry of Culture and Sport: 12th EPCA.



131. Sternari: general view of the excavation. © Ministry of Culture and Sport: 8th EPCA.

However, within this varied picture of rural agriculture, some interesting developments are evident. Chief of these may be the realization amongst scholars of the import of animal husbandry on the spread and efficacy of mixed farming. Animals provide the cheapest and most beneficial source of nitrogen, and recent archaeozoological studies have shown that many breeds of Roman-era livestock were larger than their Iron Age ancestors and Medieval descendants. Productivity of ancient animal husbandry can be demonstrated archaeologically, but for crop yields we are reliant on literature. However, several core crops were obviously part of a true mass market in the Roman period – olive oil and wine being the most notable. Amphora studies have shown that relatively far-flung 'brands' made their way into even the most remote rural corners of Greece (Lawall 2011). The significance of this is not just in the, perhaps selective, connectedness of disparate corners of the province, but also in what it hints about the movement of less visible agricultural goods. Cheese, meat and fish products, nuts, vegetables and fruit were all traded, and may have been not uncommon in the rural landscape.

Challenges

Alongside these developments, there is also a number of growing challenges facing studies of the rural landscape. I have written elsewhere about problems of site classification (Stewart 2013b), and, indeed, some of the key developments discussed above are aimed at working around the problem of classifying artefact scatters in the landscape. However, the fact remains that in order to understand what is happening in the landscape, and to relate it to current understandings, some sort of classificatory schema is required. There is a significant difference between an elite estate and a small farmstead, and it would be wrong to pretend that these were not differences that existed in the ancient world (even if they do not accord with our modern definitions). The problem arises because we do not know the full range of 'site types' that may have existed in the ancient world, we cannot presume that sites only ever had a single function and we cannot know how our data relate to the ancient lived reality beyond the most general terms. Our site hierarchies are based on imperfect data, formed primarily from artefact scatters, composed of ceramics, the majority of which we can neither identify nor date.

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	Southern Argolid	*Boeotia Survey*	*Methana*	*Laconia*	*Berbati-Limnes*	*PRAP*	*Asea Valley*	*Generic site category*
Town	YES	YES		YES				*Urban*
Village		YES		YES		YES	YES	
Settlement		YES	YES			YES		
Hamlet		YES		YES			YES	*Village*
Cluster		YES		YES	YES	YES		
Multiple farm				YES				
Villa	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Estate		YES				YES		*Villa/estate*
Elite residence						YES		
Farm		YES	YES	YES				
Farmstead	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Small farm		YES		YES				*Farmstead*
Agricultural		YES	YES		YES			
Field buildings	YES							
Habitation	YES	YES	YES	YES				
Residential		YES	YES		YES			
Structure		YES	YES		YES			*Domestic*
Seasonal			YES		YES	YES	YES	
Sherd scatter	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES		
Fortress		YES	YES	YES	YES			
Fort			YES					
Tower			YES		YES			
Watchtower							YES	
Fortification	YES	YES						
Guard point/post					YES		YES	
Baths			YES		YES	YES		
Roadside inn							YES	
Storage			YES					*Special purpose*
Industrial		YES	YES					
Production site			YES			YES		
Workshop					YES			
Quarry	YES							
Press								
Kiln	YES		YES				YES	
Wells	YES							
Spring				YES			YES	
Inscription	YES	YES						

Table 2. Comparison of site classification by select surveys.

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	Southern Argolid	*Boeotia Survey*	*Methana*	*Laconia*	*Berbati-Limnes*	*PRAP*	*Asea Valley*	*Generic site category*
Large sanctuary				YES				
Sanctuary	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Small sanctuary				YES				
Church	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES		
Cult site		YES	YES		YES		YES	*Religious*
Religious					YES			
Memorial	YES							
Shrine	YES	YES		YES				
Votives						YES		
Cemetery	YES	YES	YES					
Tombs		YES				YES		*Funerary*
Grave		YES			YES	YES		
Burial		YES			YES			

Table 2 (continued). Comparison of site classification by select surveys. Surveys are arranged in chronological order from left to right; site categories are arranged in broad hierarchical order from top to bottom; highlighted are the common categories. Inspired by Witcher 2012: table 1. Data: Southern Argolid: Jameson et al. 1994: 248–52, especially 249, table 4.5; Boeotia Survey: Bintliff et al. 2007: 43–94; Methana: Mee and Forbes 1997: 118–74; Laconia: Catling 2002: 187–93; Shipley 2002: 261–63; Berbati-Limnes: Penttinen 1996: 231–72; Forsell 1996: 286–340; PRAP (Pylos Regional Archaeological Project): Alcock et al. 2005; online gazetteer at http://docs.classics.uc.edu/fmi/xsl/prap/sites_list.xsl; Asea Valley: Forsén 2003a: 21–22, fig. 7; 2003b: 77–126. Both the Antikythera and the Eastern Korinthia surveys undertook 'site-less' surveying, resisting functional categorization of artefact scatters.

Despite the problematic nature of the evidence in the landscape, archaeologists tend to abstract it further by grouping it into larger typological hierarchies, in essence, deciding on the relative proportions of farmsteads, villas/estates, hamlets, villages and towns within an area based on these data (see table 2; for key debates on site classification, see Gallant 1986; Keay and Millett 1991; Osborne 1992; Mee and James 2000; Pettegrew 2001; Foxhall 2004; Witcher 2012). There is nothing inherently bad about this, I should stress, except that there are significant difference both between and within projects about how these hierarchies are constructed. Not only do surveys employ different descriptors within their site hierarchies, but exactly what density of artefacts constitutes a site and what is simply background 'noise' has never been satisfactorily resolved. This becomes especially problematic as more and more studies are looking across regions at single 'site types' – it's hard to have a conversation about *villae* when nobody is defining them in the same way.

Another significant challenge can be seen in the tension between managing archaeological resources alongside contemporary economic concerns. Of course, the present inhabitants of Greece cannot be held as hostages to the past, but it is important to note that straitened economic times lead to increasing exploitation of ancient landscapes. The increase in long-term unemployment in Greece (www.eu-employment-observatory.net/resources/reviews/Greece-LTU-July2012.pdf) has been met with an increase in rural agricultural practice, especially amongst the young (Babington and Papadimas 2012). While data are scarce, renewed exploitation of the agricultural landscape can only have knock-on effects for archaeological materials, both in terms of access to land and with regard to the impact of intensification on the land itself.

This is not a new problem – the introduction of mechanized cultivation to most areas of Greece in the late 1960s to 1980s (and its intensification after EU accession in 1981) has long been a recognized challenge for the survival of archaeological materials (and indeed for the long-term viability of agricultural

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soils; it is estimated that more than 8% of hilly agricultural land has been abandoned in recent years due to soil erosion related to deep ploughing: Kosmas *et al*. 2006: 283). Mechanized cultivation not only increases the depth of ploughing (and therefore disturbs deeper archaeological materials), but it also allows for the cultivation of marginal land, even if only for a limited time. The use of these same areas in Antiquity is not fully understood, though it is assumed that in some areas marginal land might have been used for olive cultivation or, more frequently, pastoralism. Archaeological evidence of animal husbandry practices is largely ephemeral – deep ploughing makes it invisible.

Finally, we can turn to a nascent focus on previously invisible discourses of identity and the classical past. Hamish Forbes' work on alterity and identity in rural Greece has highlighted the ways in which disparate groups of modern Greek citizens selectively interact with elements of the past, building different notions of Greek identity from those generated by more mainstream communities (Forbes 2014). It is a fascinating study that highlights the differences between what archaeologists and local communities value of the past. The challenge it presents is in forcing us, as archaeologists, to be more inclusive and sensitive about how we approach the past, how we present it to local communities and how we include alternative views within our narratives. This is important, not just because local communities are key to safeguarding the cultural heritage we, as archaeologists, hope to study; but also because it is an acknowledgement that our approach to the past is only one amongst a range of approaches. This brings us neatly back to the opening image – we must always be aware of our negotiations between the landscapes of the imagination and the physical landscapes we encounter in Greece, of accommodating the contemporary reality to our dreams of a Greece long gone.

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