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**Title:** Rural landscapes along the Vardar Valley: two site-less surveys near Veles and Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia

**Issue Date:** 2014-09-24

# **“Rural Landscapes along the Vardar Valley: two site-less surveys near Veles and Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia”**

**Propositions Damjan Donev**

## **Study subject**

1. The rural communities along the Vardar valley (Republic of Macedonia) were small, sub-corporate communities intensively exploiting only a portion of their physical surrounding. The sudden but brief episodes of expansion show that this was not necessarily determined by the carrying capacities of the survey areas.
2. The “minimum effort rule” explains why settlement and its components often appear like outgrowths of the micro-topography, even in cases when their monumentality cannot be denied.
3. Apart from the constant shifts in the settlements' micro-locations, the distribution of the surface remains also showed a wide range of dispersal or agglomeration tendencies. They reflect not only changes in agricultural production, but also certain socio-cultural and demographic transformations.
4. The two surveys along the Vardar seem to show a correlation between the degree of physical integration of the studied landscapes and the existence of a nucleated settlement. It is as if the physical integration of the landscape was somehow transferred to the local community, boasting its own integrity.
5. Predictably the local settlement dynamics in physically better defined areas show more continuity and coherence and are easier to understand through the work of “internal” factors.

## **Broader field of topic of study:**

6. I believe that the changes in settlement size, location and internal structure can be used as sources for the study of the local socio-historical conditions and economic strategies.
7. Despite the initial scepticism, the impact of broader regional tendencies and developments is often observable in the local histories of settlement.
8. Systematic ceramic surveys strive to define quantitative phenomena, so an even coverage of the survey area and the collection of sufficiently large samples of surface material has found no alternative up to-date.
9. The paradox of ceramic surveys is that once archaeological sites are conceived of in quantitative terms and not as physical phenomena, the concept becomes a liability. A site-less approach is the logical implication.
10. Ceramic surveys can only tell us a part of the story of the studied landscapes. Ceramic spreads are rarely unambiguous and reveal only a segment of the spectrum of habitation activities.
11. Despite some recent outbursts of impatience and dissatisfaction systematic ceramic survey remains an irreplaceable tool for the study of human landscapes.
12. Studying the habitation practices on a micro-regional level in the long-term is an insightful adventure and an important contribution to the anthropology of human settlement. I.e. there is nothing wrong in looking through the micro-scope.