Chapter 5
The Skyros survey: a site-based intensive and extensive survey

5.1 REGIONAL SCOPE

In the theory of survey, special attention has been paid to the regional scope, thus, deploying sampling theory, on the selection of a region, or of its representative territory, on which a survey is implemented (Cherry 1983, 385). Many past surveys have defined their region of interest in cultural terms (e.g. the territory of a Greek *Polis*; see Cherry 1983, 386), but since very early on this approach resulted in problems: bearing in mind the diachronic perspective of a good survey, "an area survey ideal for one period may not be suitable for others" (Cherry 1983, 386). This difficulty has been faced in the definition of the area of the Laconia survey for example (Cavanagh *et al.* 2002, 12). As Cherry argues, the problem of orientation is solved by the more or less arbitrary selection of a block of land and the study of the changing settlement systems within it. The arbitrariness can be reduced by defining the region to coincide with natural borders, while what we should aim for, are regions naturally defined with cultural relevance, like the small islands, which are characterised as ideal cases (1983, 386).

In the discussion of the problem of orientation of the Keos survey, it was noted that the insularity of a small island presents advantages in this sort of studies: "Islands have clearly defined and relatively unchanging boundaries that delimit a natural area which can be expected to behave to some extent as a unified cultural unit" (Cherry *at al.* 1991, 9).

With these considerations in mind, it is clear that Skyros falls in this last, more advantageous case, being on the Aegean scale an island of medium size (215 sq. km) and presenting a cultural unity.

5.2 CHRONOLOGICAL FRAME OF THE SURVEY

As many have pointed out, good surveys are diachronic. However, many Greek surveys in the past have had as their main goal the investigation of a particular period in a given region, a fact that generally did not raise too many objections as a method (Cherry 1983, 85). Moreover, many of these surveys, although their explicit focus was on a specific period, have, through their systematization and scientific mode resulted in more evidence about periods that were initially outside their aims. A typical example of this phenomenon is the grand-father of the Greek surveys, the University Minnesota Messenia Expedition project, that despite its subtitle "Reconstructing a Bronze Age Regional Environment" (McDonald & Rapp 1972), provides much evidence for the historical periods as well.

However, it is generally accepted that many surveys undertaken in the Greek area until recently, although declaiming their diachronic perspective, in reality were significantly concentrated in the Prehistoric and Greco-Roman periods rather than the Post-Roman. This was not only because of their stated interest; the slow development of Medieval archaeology in Greece, and especially of material culture studies, has resulted in the phenomenon that there is more known about prehistoric pottery than about the ceramics a few decades old. This had as a result, in the final publications of the purportedly diachronic archaeological surveys, that the Post-Roman periods tend to be represented with no archaeology at all, depending almost exclusively on the historical sources and churches for the reconstruction of the regional history of these periods (e.g. Melos survey). Where some Post-Roman archaeological material was taken into consideration, this was underestimated as, in contrast to the detailed chronological subdivisions of the Prehistoric and Greco-Roman periods, the Post-Ro-

man material was represented only by the wide term 'Medieval' or 'Byzantine', covering a chronological range of approximately 1000 years (e.g. Southern Euboea survey).

In contrast to the majority of all the aforementioned projects, in the Skyros survey the opposite was true: it has had as its focus the Late Roman and Post-Roman periods. Careful consideration was given to the material from the Late Roman to Early Modern times, and the various chronological subdivisions are, in this case, occurring in this era, while the pre-Late Roman periods are represented by the general 'Prehistoric' or 'Greco-Roman' appellations. This is of course a measure not taken as the revenge of a Post-Roman archaeologist on his predecessors, but simply an adjustment taken by a one-man specialization and effort for an entire region. Being aware of the importance of the diachronic perspective of the survey and of my incapacity to treat adequately material which in other cases is processed by entire teams, I preferred to record the older of my focus area material, chronologically more broadly. In this way I have avoided an important peril, that of misleading reports stemming from possible false chronologies and on the other hand, I have succeeded in offering a more complete picture of the settlement patterns of Skyros.

5.3 SURVEY DESIGN

Some comparative models

It is generally accepted that because of limitations of manpower availability, time and resources, in combination with the size of the study area, sampling strategies are considered an inevitable method for archaeological investigation, for excavations and surveys alike.[1] Taking as example four Greek surveys in areas similar to Skyros (the islands of Melos, Keos and the peninsulas of Methana and Southern Argolid), we notice four different survey designs/sampling schemes (Fig. 5.1). In Melos, the acknowledged limits in time and resources in combination with the proposed intensity and the size of the research area (151 sq km), obliged the Melos team to create eight random transect samples, oriented north-south, where intensive survey took place. Thus, from the 151 sq km of the area under study, in reality only 20% was intensively investigated (Cherry 1982, 16-7). In Keos, although the "fundamental aim of the survey was to study how society on Keos changed and developed over the extensive period from the island's first colonization until the present day..." (Cherry *et al.* 1991, 14), the survey area eventually selected as a sample was concentrated north-west of the island in an area of some 18 sq km. Thus, of the 103 sq km total area of Keos, only 15% has been intensively investigated (Cherry *et al.* 1991, 14-6). In Methana, the intensively investigated area was chosen on the grounds of the preliminary reconnaissance made by the survey team and their estimation regarding the 'site' density, rather than a random sample. Thus, the survey was concentrated on the coastal zone, being more selective in an area with an altitude of 100-400 metres and in areas with limestone and volcanic formations, where the extensive survey proved to be unproductive. Thus, of the 50 sq km total area of the peninsula, no more than 21% was intensively investigated (Mee & Forbes 1997, 33-4). Finally in the Southern Argolid, without being clearly specified why specific areas were intensively surveyed in preference to others, of the 225 sq km of the area under study, only 20% was intensively investigated, while the rest of the area has been only extensively examined (Jameson *et al.* 1994, 218).

The Skyros model

The Skyros survey was a site-based extensive and locally intensive survey. The method followed was to examine the entire island extensively (inevitably in a site-concentrated manner), and conduct intensive survey in 16 case-studies settlement-sites, to represent as much as possible the geographical areas of the island (north, south, coastal, inland) (Fig. 5.2)

This method, I believe, was the best way to investigate an insular region like Skyros for one man. Intensive survey in all of the 215 sq km of the island was of course out of the question. The random sample-transects of the Melos project has been criticised as "admirably suited for documenting sites whose distribution is both ubiquitous and numerous (for example, Roman villas or Greek Early Bronze Age and Classical small farmstead distributions), [but] suffers from an inability to record sites whose distribution is highly localized and rare" (Bintliff 2000a,

1 Exception to the rule is the tiny island of Antikythera (20.8 sq. km), the first Mediterranean island being surveyed in its entirety (see Bevan & Conolly 2013).

8). Moreover, Snodgrass commenting on the question regarding if Phylakopi was the only inhabited site in Melos in the Mid-Late Bronze Age, states: "There are alternative ways of choosing a 20% sample of a territory which, in some cases at least, give a more reliable picture of the whole...I feel that by surveying a carefully chosen chunk of Melos, preferably in one place, the authors would have had more success..." (Snodgrass 1982, 721). On the other hand by following the Keos model, choosing thus a chunk of Skyros, following the suggestion of Snodgrass for Melos, this would face the problem discussed above, that an area survey ideal for one period may not be suitable for others. Indeed, this is the reply that Cherry gives to Snodgrass in his aforementioned suggestion (Cherry 1983, 404), and this is a weakness that the Keos team admits for their survey area (Cherry *et al.* 1991, 16). By contrast, by investigating the island for almost three years (2010-2013) extensively, taking advantage of the good knowledge of Skyros as native of the

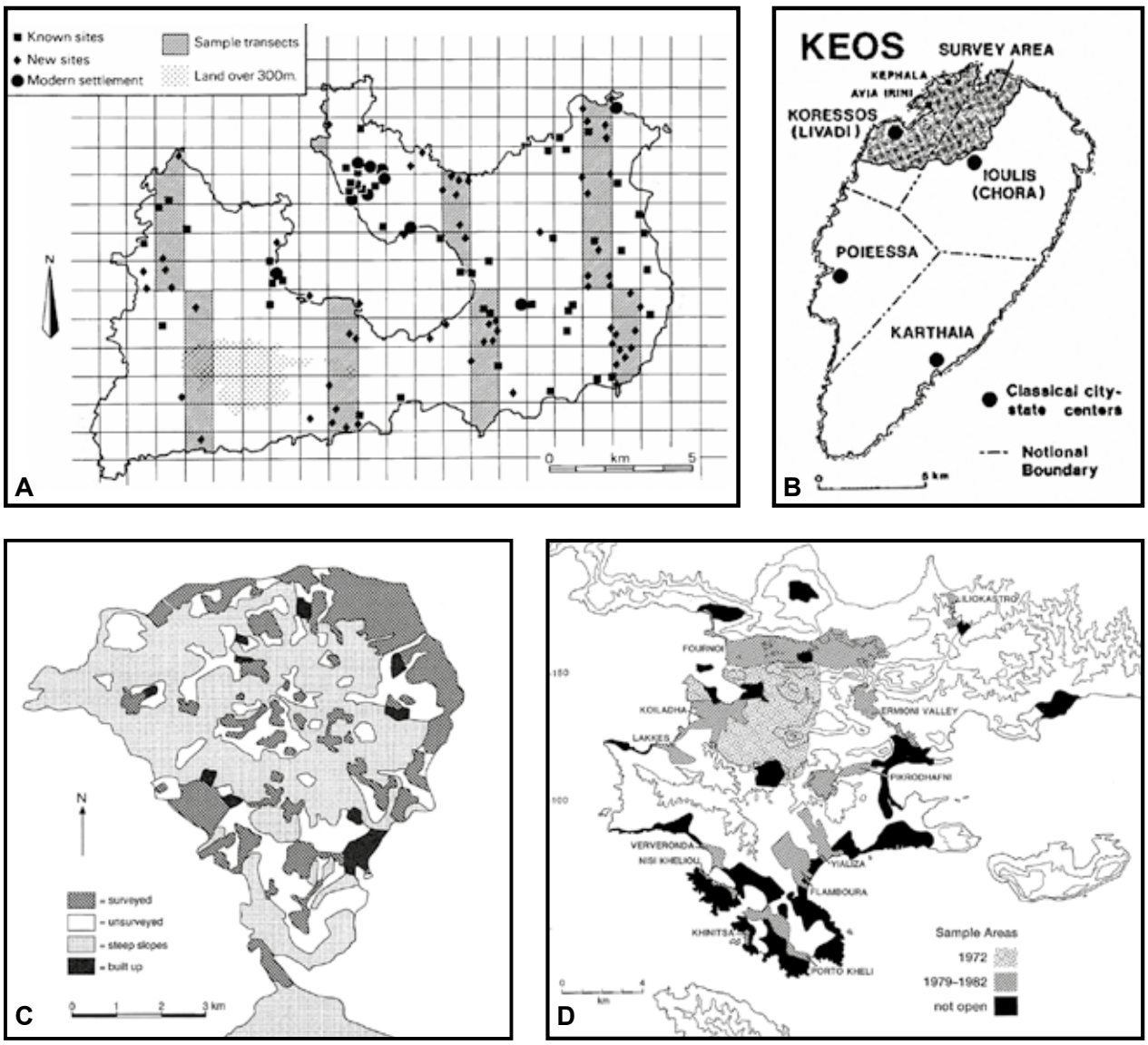

Fig. 5.1: Survey designs of Melos (A), Keos (B), Methana (C) and Argolid (D) (after Cherry 1982, 18, fig. 2.1; Cherry *et al*. 1991, 6, fig. 1.1; Mee & Forbes 1997, 34, fig. 3.1; Jameson *et al*. 1994, 217, fig. 4.1).

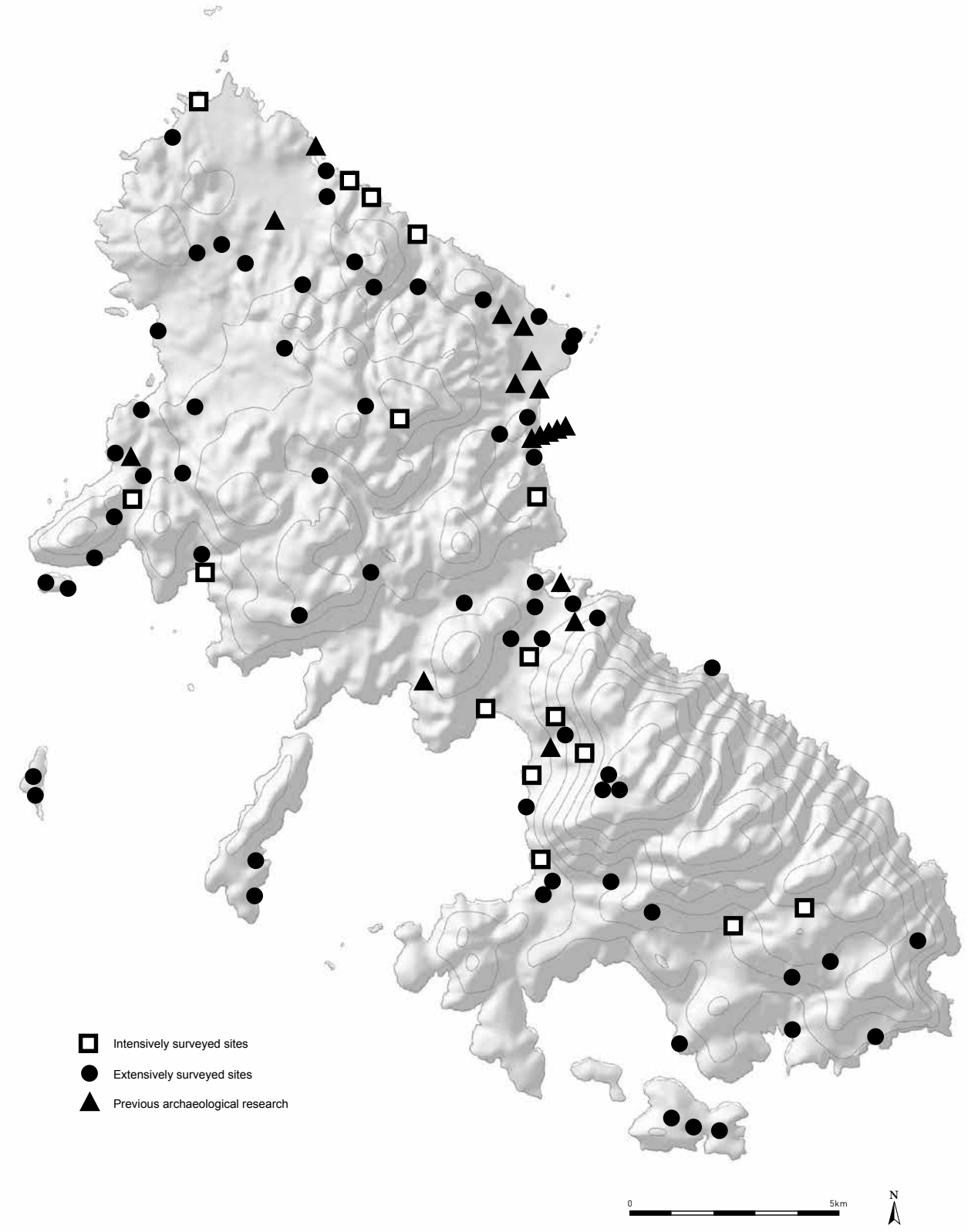

Fig. 5.2: Skyros survey design.

place, and by implementing a more thorough analysis through intensive survey on 16 settlement-sites, I believe I have managed in general to 'catch' a representative sample for my case study.

Moreover, as Cherry argues, based on K.V. Flannery's statements in his book *The early Mesoamerican village* (1976), "for most areas where there is likely to be a size hierarchy of sites, traditional extensive survey techniques and chance local discoveries are likely to detect most of the sites in the upper and middle tiers of the hierarchy: indeed the size or imposing character of the most important sites will usually make them very difficult to miss. At the lower end of the hierarchy, however, there can be expected large numbers of small unobtrusive sites which might well be overlooked by any but the most intensive survey..."(Cherry 1982, 16). The evaluation of the Skyros survey regarding this matter, apart from a future, more intensive survey which could test it, is for now to compare the Skyros values with other more intensive surveys. But before doing that, it is necessary first to clarify what we are comparing, thus to discuss the 'site definition'.

5.4 SITE DEFINITION

As Cherry again argues "there is the need to be very explicit about what we mean when we use terms such as 'site', lest we end up comparing apples with oranges: if one survey project, on the 2 sq km Cretan island of Pseira can report almost as many so-called 'sites' (*c.* 300) as another, of the entire 2.500 sq km north Greek province of Grevena, something must surely be amiss" (Cherry 2004, 29). For the team of the Argolid survey for example, "the term 'site' is nothing more than a convenient way to designate a locality where cultural materials were found, apparently belonging together. Thus a grave only a few square meters in area was called a site, just as was a walled settlement many hectares in extent. [For the Argolid team] the definition of a site included isolated features, such as a well or an inscription, but was intended to exclude materials deposited or distributed solely by natural processes" (Jameson *et al.* 1994, 221).

The inclusion of the 'isolated features, such as a well or an inscription' for the case of Skyros, considering the emphasis of the project on the Post-Roman times, would mean that all material remains of human activity dated until the 1950s (houses, huts, folds, mills, threshing floors, wells etc.), should be incorporated into the catalogue of sites, something which, however correct or not, would be impossible given the limits of one person.

An additional difficulty is introduced by the numerous Ottoman and Early Modern churches of the island. If an ancient isolated grave or inscription deserves to be considered as 'site', then I cannot understand why a church, clear evidence of past human activity, does not deserve the same! However, the churches of Skyros number a staggering 176; the incorporation of the 176 churches, in combination with the inclusion of all the aforementioned Early Modern domestic structures into the catalogue of 'sites', although that *sensu strictu* could be considered as 'sites', would produce misleading 'site' numbers, incompatible with other surveys. Thus, it was decided that churches should not be included into the catalogue of sites (Appendix A) and just be mentioned if they were located in settlements, presenting in this way the diachronic human activity on a specific place. As for the churches, more or less the same goes for the numerous domestic Early Modern structures: in the catalogue of sites there are reported only those located on settlement sites with attested prior human activity, while in the chapter on the Early Modern Skyros, in a related map are indicated all the huts/farmsteads identified in the countryside, during a special survey carried out for this purpose.

After this clarification I can state that the term 'site', in the case of Skyros, includes all the types of material remains of past human activity on the island until and including the Ottoman period (the churches and landscape architecture noted above excluded), regardless if a specific site regards a permanent or seasonal residual settlement, or a find of industrial or burial function, such as a quarry or cemetery/grave. A catalogue of the recorded sites is provided in Appendix A, while the 16 settlement-sites which have been intensively surveyed are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

5.5 SITE DENSITY: SOME COMPARATIVE DATA

Returning now to the results of the Skyros survey and their comparison with other comparable intensive surveys of Greece, we can present the following estimations. In Appendix A are 96 sites; from them

only 11 have been included in the gazetteer purely on the grounds of previous archaeological research. The remaining 85 have been surveyed (16 intensively and 69 extensively), providing for the majority of them significant new information. Among them, 43 sites are presented here for the first time, being exclusively fruits from fieldwork.

The 96 sites correspond in terms of site density for the 215 sq km total area of Skyros, to 0.44 sites/sq km. Comparing now the Skyros values with other Greek surveys, we notice the following: in the final publication of Melos, there is provided a register of archaeological sites of the island, including all the until then known sites, recorded from the survey and the previous archaeological investigation; 119 sites are recorded in the 151 sq km of Melos, which corresponds to 0.78 sites/sq km, a site density almost double that of Skyros. The difference is even more strik-

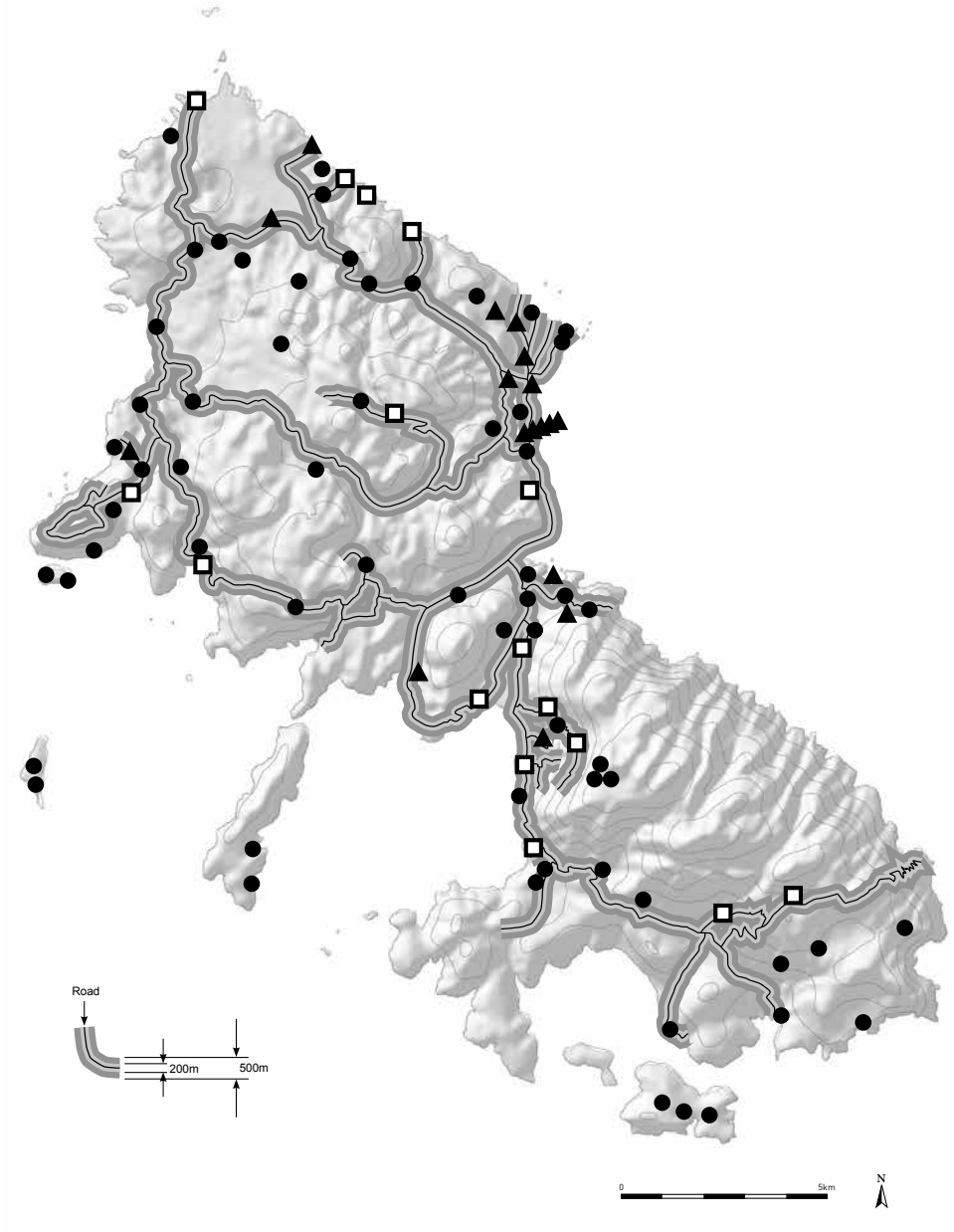

Fig. 5.3: Relationship between sites and modern roads network.

ing by comparing the Skyros values with Methana, where in a peninsula of 50 sq km in size, the intensive survey has recorded 145 sites, corresponding to 2.9 sites/sq km (Mee & Forbes 1997, 118-74). Similarly, in the Northern Keos survey the equivalent catalogue includes 71 sites for an area of 18 sq km, scoring in 3.9 sites/sq km (Cherry *et al.* 1991, 69-128). Finally, controlling an inland survey, this of Boeotia, we notice that merely in the Leondari SE/Thespiai S sector, in an area of only 5.2 sq. km, 17 sites have been revealed (Bintliff *et al.* 2007, 129), corresponding to 3.2 sites/sq km.

Taking into account the low score of site density for the Skyros survey in comparison to four Greek surveys, it is clear that what is presented here is only a selective number of the sites of Skyros and that plenty of them remain still in the shadows, waiting to be found. This difference in site densities between the Skyros survey and the other four, must be accounted for by the extensive mode of the former, and particularly into the blank zones of the inland area of the island. As Fig. 5.3 shows, the majority of the recorded sites are located in the coastal zones or a small distance from the modern roads. On the contrary, in the central inland areas of the north and south part of the island is a relatively big gap of sites. Indeed, the dense pine and cedar forest which covers the majority of the central north part and the mountainous area with almost no road accessibility at the south, made impossible the survey of these territories and interestingly enough, no information has been gleaned from these areas from previous archaeological research either.

However, by comparing the number of sites revealed by the Skyros survey to the percentage of the intensively surveyed area of the island, would render the Skyros survey quite successful, as the 96 sites have been revealed in only 0.570 sq km intensively surveyed territory of the 215 sq km of the island, thus

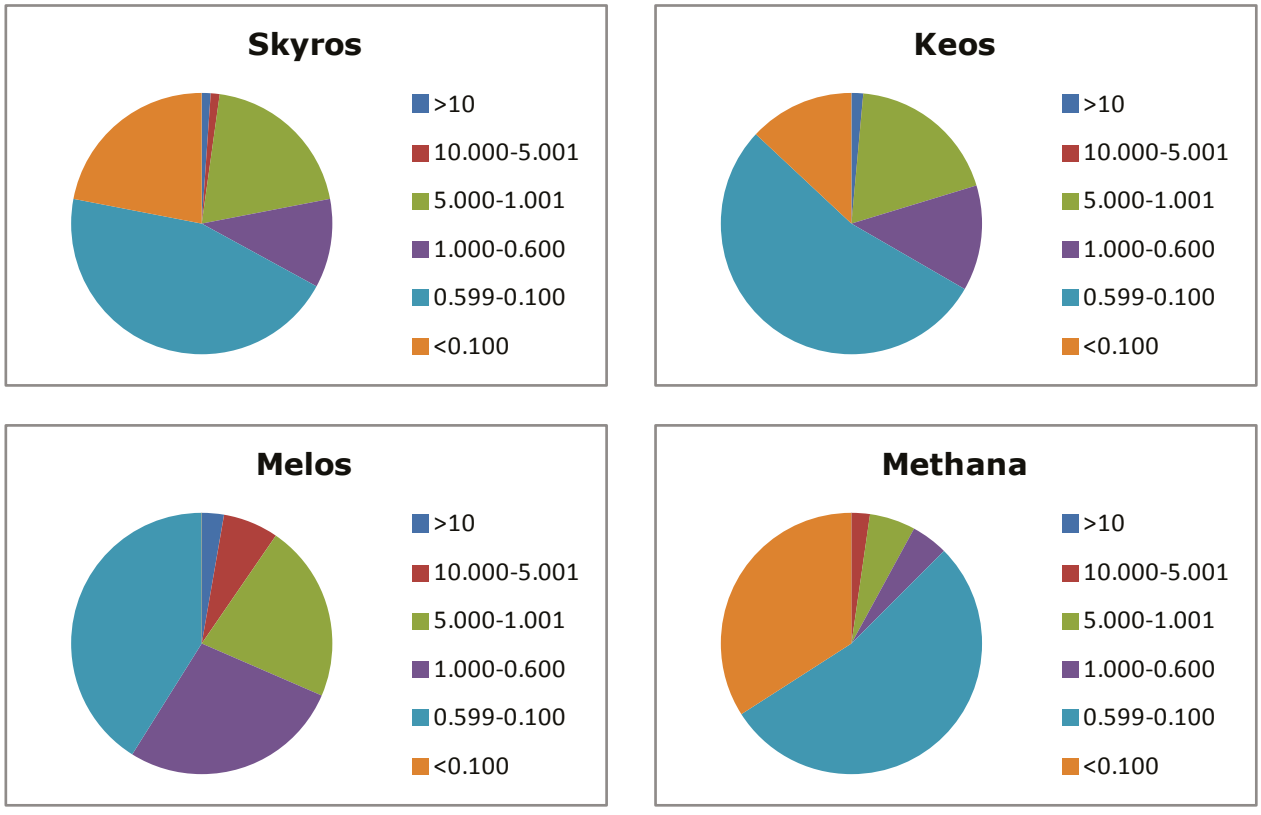

Fig. 5.4: Comparison of site sizes in four surveys in descending order by size/ha; Skyros: 96 sites for 215 sq km (0.44 sites/sq km); Keos 71 sites for 18 sq km (3.9 sites/sq km); Melos: 119 sites for 151 sq km (0.78 sites/sq km); Methana: 220 sites for 50 sq km (4.4 sites/sq km).

in *c.* 0.26% of the total surface of Skyros. The 119 sites of the Melos survey have been revealed in 20% of the total surface of the island.

Furthermore, there is an interesting observation to make in the Skyros case: remembering the words of Flannery (1976, 159) about the size hierarchy of sites and that extensive surveys are likely to detect only the largest and most prominent of them while the smaller can be only identified by 'the most intensive survey', we notice that this is not the case for Skyros. Comparing the site sizes of the Skyros survey with those of Melos, Kea and Methana, the figure is very similar (Fig. 5.4). Actually the Skyros survey takes the second position after Methana in the detection of small sites <0.1 ha in size. Thus it is clear from this exercise that the Skyros survey has not recorded only the largest and most prominent sites of the island.