
ARHEO

Akti simpozija / Acts of the Conference

VREDNOTENJE ARHEOLOŠKIH NAJDIŠČ
TER SISTEM(I) VAROVANJA IN UPRAVLJANJA
ARHEOLOŠKE DEDIŠČINE

*EVALUATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES
AND SYSTEM(S) OF PROTECTING AND
MANAGING ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE*

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Introduction

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It has now been a year since the conference on preventive archaeology (Djurić 2012) that we meet again, this time to discuss a topic that is a logical continuation of the last year's conference. A year ago, we addressed the topic that we had all been intensely discussing and living from the late 1990s onwards, all of which led to a reorganization of the heritage protection service, to important changes formulated in Slovenia in the new Cultural Heritage Protection Act (ZVKD-1) as well as to the new Rules on Archaeological Investigations (PAR) adopted just days ago. Today's topic is admittedly one that my generation, but also younger ones, never thought systematically and, as a consequence, never acted on in an integral manner. For some time now, a good system of listing archaeological sites has been operational in Slovenia, developed over a long period of time by our colleagues from the conservation service. On that subject, there are currently 3295 archaeological sites listed in the Cultural Heritage Register, 1046 of which were declared as monuments of local and 31 as monuments of national importance. Leaving aside the fact that, in my estimation, their number is modest and their spatial distribution biased, which is the consequence of a more or less significant presence of archaeologists in individual areas of the national territory, we could reasonably expect the cited numbers to reflect the hierarchy of importance of individual archaeological sites. However, this is not the case, as revealed by a cursory look at the list of monuments of national importance – of the 31 units, only 9 are declared on the basis of their archaeological importance, 21 form part of another whole (either a nature park, a market town centre or other), while one enjoys the status only temporarily and will not be able to keep it. The reasons for this will be discussed on another occasion. Anyone familiar with the archaeological sites in Slovenia, can very quickly ascertain that the selection of monuments of national importance is strongly biased and, more importantly, incomplete. We can assume a similar situation for the selection of monuments of local importance, since there is no standard and comprehensive set of criteria that would define:

1. physical qualities (such as integrity and preservation);
2. intrinsic qualities (such as rarity, research potential, group value, amenity) and
3. the assessment of monument's perception (that is its aesthetic and historic values).

Furthermore, there are also no criteria that would allow sites to be evaluated and hierarchized.

I would even go as far as assume that no one knows the entire body of listed archaeological sites in Slovenia as well as to assess the degree of bias in the Register in connection with the representation of sites according to individual periods of time and according to type. What this means is that we lack the basis for a rational management of the archaeological heritage.

It is precisely this state of affairs that led the Slovenian Archaeological Society to organize this meeting. We see it as the beginning of an extensive discussion on the evaluation of archaeological sites and on the conditions for their proper management. This discussion is by no means to be held by conservators alone, though it would not be entirely possible without them; it should involve all of us.

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