



Protecting the Value of Archaeological Heritage: Frame of Reference in Value Assessments

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Abstract. Today archaeological research goals in the field of heritage management are shaped by the possibilities and limitations of value assessments that can provide clear and justified statements that support decisions on employed protection systems and management methods. But the reliability of value assessments is related to the existing knowledge about spatial and temporal features of a particular element of archaeological heritage as an insight into the distribution and relative preservation of a certain type of archaeological remains. Because of that, the lack of regional archaeological research is still the most common obstacle in the development of specific evaluation methods and meaningful evaluation criteria. As comparability of value judgments is the basic prerequisite of any effective evaluation and the most significant element of the value formulation process, the most important factor of the assessment becomes the frame of reference in relation to which the value judgements are made. Based on two case studies which cover different Bronze Age settlements with regionally specific types of preserved architectural elements, the authors will show the significance and meaning of the frame of reference in the process of value assessment. Development of such a system aims, not only to enable a deeper understanding of specific types of archaeological remains but also to provide the basis for the development of predictive modelling and implementation of the systems of expected values in heritage evaluation as an essential prerequisite for the effective process of archaeological heritage management.

Keywords: Archaeological Heritage · Value assessments
Frame of reference · Evaluation criteria · Late Bronze Age Settlements

1 Value of Archaeological Heritage

Today, archaeology is a part of wider political and economic interests so archaeological research and development goals are necessary reoriented towards the field of archaeological heritage management [1–3]. The main focus of this activity becomes the issue of selection shaped by the possibilities and limitations of value assessments that can provide clear and grounded statements about the value of archaeological remains and support decisions about prescribed management methods [4]. The value assessment

gives an insight into the reasons for the protection and preservation, so the evaluation becomes understood as the procedure of formation of value statements based on arguments derived from the predesigned assessment strategy. The final aim of the procedure is a determination of archaeological remains that are worth preserving and formulation of appropriate treatment for the others [5].

On the above-mentioned basis, in the western, predominantly in the English-speaking world, the idea of designing explicit, well-established and defensible evaluation criteria has been developed. For the last decades such an approach is spreading around the world [6] and today many countries use differently formulated sets of criteria in the evaluation process. But it is often forgotten that the criteria can only be used if they allow comparisons and that evaluation necessarily requires the design of clearly defined frame of reference that represents the basis for understanding the obtained estimates.

By applying the set of criteria and the frame of reference, it is possible to compare the levels of values attributed to the various elements of heritage [7, 8]. In that manner designed assessments form a meaningful system for rigorous and consistent decision making, results of which can be effectively measured and monitored. The benefits of this type of evaluation are visible in the systematic organization of the judgement process, the possibilities of assessing elements of heritage with lower values and the possibility of meaningful comparison between sites. At the same time, they enable presentation and analysis of the obtained results and retrospective analysis of previous estimates. In addition, they create a feedback mechanism that is important for consensus formation [9] and prerequisites for the development of new, well-defined and intellectually rigorous frameworks for future evaluations [10].

2 Frame of Reference and Evaluation of Archaeological Heritage

Existing evaluation models developed in different national frameworks usually use set of criteria based on highly similar theoretical bases and have similar features and exploratory models (Table 1). Assessments are usually trying to achieve a suitable balance between the scientific significance of heritage and its wider social values. In general, the criteria for evaluation of archaeological record can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of criteria that encompass the broader social values of archaeological heritage that contribute to different social goals and have an impact on activity and behaviour, which can strengthen social relationships and expand social activity, but also be a generator of financial gain [11]. The second category consists of the spatially and temporally determined values that arise from the current knowledge about their distribution and the level of their preservation, and can ultimately be understood as general heritage values. The third category comprises criteria intended for assessing the physical remains of archaeological record based on its quality and informational potential, the criteria for understanding its scientific value [12–16]. At the same time, meaningful value assessments are not possible without a predefined frame of reference, so any type of evaluation of archaeological record must include its categorization based on the components which place it in pre-defined

Table 1. An example of evaluation criteria and parameters according to which it is possible to evaluate elements of archaeological heritage [17].

CATEGORIES	CRITERIA	PARAMETERS
SOCIAL VALUES	1. VISUAL VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – visibility as an ability to influence the experience of place and space – recognizability in space – preservation of physical features, forms and structures – attitude towards the landscape
	2. HISTORICAL VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – connection with real historical events or issues from local, regional, national or international history – connections with people, events, activities – attributed quality, properties or meaning and connection to the myths and legends of a local or regional community – contribution to interpretation and interpretation of space
	3. ECONOMIC VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – economic opportunities and the ability to generate direct or indirect profits – accessibility and management capabilities – ability to engage in other segments of social and economic life as a contribution to the educational, recreational and aesthetic quality of the area
GENERAL VALUES	4. RARITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – known and comparable archaeological remains from the same period in the same region – exceptionality based on the preservation of the archaeological record – exceptionality depending on the manner and patterns of the use of space or based on other cultural and historical features
	5. GROUP VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the presence of a synchronic context that implies preservation of archaeological remains from the same period in the immediate vicinity – presence of a diachronic context that implies preservation of archaeological remains from different periods in the immediate vicinity – presence of a landscape context that implies the physical and/or histogeographical integrity of a contemporary landscape
	6. REPRESENTATIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – essential features of a particular area and/or period

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

CATEGORIES	CRITERIA	PARAMETERS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – number of preserved and known temporally and spatially comparable records – level of preservation of physical remains
SCIENTIFIC VALUES	7. INTEGRITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – stability of the natural environment – level of threats caused by human activity – the spatial integrity of the archaeological record – level of intactness of archaeological stratification
	8. QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – level of preservation of the physical remains of the archaeological record – clarity and readability of the stratigraphic sequence – diversity and quantity of archaeological material – presence of diagnostically relevant archaeological materials – quality of relations between stratification and preserved archaeological materials
	9. INFORMATIONAL POTENTIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the possibility of obtaining data on the formal features of archaeological remains – the possibility of obtaining data on contextual interrelations of archaeological remains – ability to draw conclusions about the spatial and temporal dimensions of human activities
	10. INTERPRETATIVE POTENTIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ability to generate new knowledge – the possibility of filling gaps in current knowledge – comparability with recent researches of similar types of archaeological remains – comparability with recent research of the region and the period

categories and based on its spatial and temporal features, sets it within archaeologically meaningful boundaries. In accordance with the criteria of value that are set out as relevant, such procedures must include an analysis of the social value and economic potential of archaeological remains if they want to reflect the values that society and different social groups can attribute to them and those that archaeological remains can generate. On the other hand, the assessment is necessarily focused on the characteristics of a particular record depending on the relationship between archaeology, region and period, and thus the frame of reference becomes a variable geographic unit that has to

match the concepts of space and time of historical communities [18]. Therefore, the process necessarily requires distinct approach to those parts of the record that can be reasonably temporally and spatially separated based on the established historical and geographical features. At the same time, preserving different categories of archaeological remains is not a matter of coincidence and is influenced by many factors such as topography and geology, climate and environmental pollution, and various physical and biological factors. Therefore a prerequisite for each categorization of the archaeological remains is a determination of typological, spatial and chronological features for the frame of reference which can allow value comparisons between different archaeological records. Only this will enable a meaningful evaluation based on regionally conditioned socio-economic interests, type, position and temporal features of a particular record, and depending on its meaning defined by the range of open questions and gaps in current knowledge.

3 Setting a Frame of Reference

Croatia is not using the presented system for evaluation of archaeological remains, which is in many respects a consequence of the underdevelopment of preventive approach to the management of archaeological heritage. Decisions about the fate of archaeological remains are usually made only with the emergence of direct threats, which makes in situ conservation that forms the basis for the long-term preservation of archaeological heritage, impossible [19]. Archaeological remains discovered before the execution of earthworks are generally subjected to archaeological excavation so during the large infrastructure works conducted over the last decade all identified archaeological sites located in the areas of intervention were investigated. During the construction of the highways through present-day Turopolje region of Croatia, parts of

Table 2. Characteristics of Bronze Age settlements located in present-day Turopolje region of Croatia

STARO ČIČE-GRADIŠĆE	KURILOVEC-BELINŠĆICA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – remains of the Late Bronze Age settlement – partially excavated between 1982 and 1987, unpublished – Late Bronze Age phase II (late Urnfield culture) – elevated position with high integrity – located by the watercourse – complex archaeological record – a common type of stratigraphic units: pits and layers – potentially disturbed structural elements of the settlement – excellent quality of preserved of artefacts and ecofacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – remains of the Late Bronze Age settlement – partially excavated in 2006, published [20] – Late Bronze Age phase I (early Urnfield culture) – lowland position with poor integrity – located by the watercourse – simpler archaeological record – a common type of stratigraphic units: postholes and pits – well preserved structural elements of the settlement – medium quality of preserved artefacts and ecofacts

several Late Bronze Age settlements were excavated. Nevertheless, research has been carried out without a clear insight into the full value of archaeological records and additionally long-lasting material and data processing, as well as ever-questionable publications of the results, disenables the achievement of set objectives. In order to illustrate the meaning of evaluation procedure under consideration, two different Late Bronze Age settlements: Staro Čiče-Gradišće and Kurilovec-Belinščica (Tab. 2); both located in Turopolje and partially excavated, will be evaluated. In order for the evaluation to be feasible, a frame of reference, that enables the assessment of every generally comparable archaeological record, has to be pre-established.

3.1 Spatial Boundaries and Features of the Area

Sites are situated in a relatively marshy lowland area located on an alluvial plateau of about 600 km² that for the period in question can be seen as a part of a wider region bounded by the distinctive natural boundaries formed by the Sava and Kupa rivers and surrounded by lower hills situated along the edges of the region (Fig. 1). Based on the characteristics of the landscape and according to the review of historical and ethnographic data, until recently the basic economic resources of the area were oak forests. Besides being a source of wood, the humid, rain-forest climate has provided exceptional conditions for the development of livestock production, while the fertile land has always provided relatively suitable conditions for agricultural activities. Today this region is quite densely populated and together with the two largest cities in this area, Zagreb and Velika Gorica are quite economically developed and recently increasingly tourist-oriented.

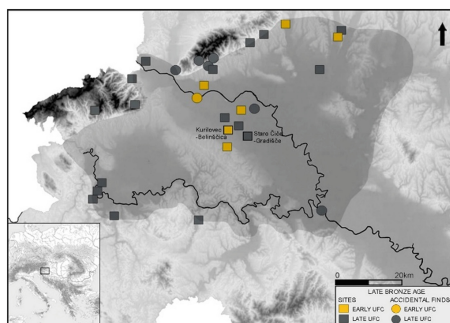


Fig. 1. Map of the Turopolje region in Croatia with positions of Late Bronze Age settlements

3.2 General Features of the Regional Late Bronze Age Archaeological Record

Although today the area is suitable for settlement and agriculture, in the past, before modern construction of the flood control system, it was characterized by variable conditions caused by constant changes in water levels. For this reason, all until recently, the entire region was considered unsuitable for more intensive settlement,

especially during prehistory. For the period of Late Bronze Age, this presumption was corroborated by a low density of archaeological remains and their more intensive distribution on the slopes of lower hills at the edge of the region. Most of these sites were accidentally discovered and they belong to the late Urnfield culture of the Late Bronze Age, (1100–800 BC). Nevertheless, rescue archaeological excavations carried out over the last decade within large infrastructure works enabled the collection of data sets that indicate much more complex patterns of settlement during the period in question. On this occasion, for the first time, settlements from the early Urnfield culture of the Late Bronze Age (1450–1150 BC) were discovered. Research results indicated more pronounced changes in the selection of locations for settlements and such results can be seen as an indication of important social and economic changes, as well as changes in the landscape and living conditions. However, usually due to unpublished, but also often poorly preserved remains, the information gathered in this way still provides an incomplete insight into life in the region during the Late Bronze Age.

3.3 Interpretative Features of Regional Late Bronze Age Archaeological Record

The knowledge about Late Bronze Age settlements in the region is very modest and until recently limited to the younger phase of the period. Location of these settlements suggests a selection of strategically dominant positions and infrastructure that adapts to steep terrain. The archaeological record usually consists of pits and cultural layers but stratification is often disturbed by natural processes (e.g. erosion, dense forest vegetation etc.) or by later occupation of the same positions. Therefore the data is mostly derived from typo-chronologically analyzed artefacts collected during few rare excavations. New data collected in the last decade revealed evidence about the early Urnfield culture of the Late Bronze Age which shows significant differences in location patterns. Known settlements are situated in the marshy lowland, in relatively similar micro-relief and hydrological conditions. They are usually located directly beside the watercourse. They are characterized by the predesigned organization of space with structures made of wood, material that is highly susceptible to decay. For this reason, the archaeological record usually consists of densely laid holes and a small number of pits which, depending on the degree of preservation, allow only partial reconstruction of above-ground structures. However, based on the current level of knowledge, there are clear differences in the spatial organization of individual settlements and some indications of typological and technological differences in the construction of objects. Also, more pronounced differences in the preservation of artefacts and ecofacts were noted, caused by both natural and cultural activities in later periods.

4 Value Assessment of Late Bronze Age Settlements

As an illustration of the use of a frame of reference in value assessments, two partially researched Late Bronze Age settlements located in the same region: Staro Čiče-Gradišče and Kurilovec-Belinščica were selected for evaluation. Although they represent the same type of archaeological remains, from the same period and from the

same area, they have been selected as representative because they contain certain differential characteristics. Estimation of their values requires consideration of their attributes according to the predefined criteria and in accordance with the established frame of reference. Evaluation is carried out through descriptive analysis and can be supplemented by awarding points to each of the given criteria which can allow quantification of the results (Table 3).

Table 3. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of Late Bronze Age settlements.

CRITERIA	VALUE ANALYSIS: STARO ČIČE-GRADIŠČE	GRADES	VALUE ANALYSIS: KURILOVEC-BELINŠČICA	GRADES
1	The position is not marked by visible structures, although the configuration of the terrain may be considered as an indication of the subsurface archaeological record. At the same time, the position of the settlement represents a reflection of preplanned selection, therefore, connected with the existing relief features. Therefore, it can be considered to have the potential to become a visible and active segment of cultural content of the region.	2	The position is not marked by visible structures or features as the site is located in the lowland area previously used for agricultural purposes and intensively ploughed. Direct surroundings are marked by large infrastructure. Because of that, it cannot be considered as still having some special form of visual value that can directly affect the development of a special sense of place or space.	1
2	Although sporadically researched, the position has an important place in Bronze Age archaeology. It is a significant archaeological record that can contribute to the knowledge about the historical and cultural meaning of the wider landscape. At the same time, its toponym can be considered a permanent reminder of the meaning it held in the past and a strong trigger for its direct linkage with historical events.	3	Although it is a record that complements the understanding of landscape usage in the Late Bronze Age, it cannot be considered to have a more pronounced historical value. At the same time, it cannot be argued that the local community attributes some special meanings to archaeological record or its location. On the other hand, its direct connection with the wider events of the Late Bronze Age, as one of the most significant periods in the archaeological past of the area, gives the possibilities for its inclusion in the historical context of the region.	2
3	Inaccessibility of the archaeological record diminishes its potential for obtaining direct economic values, although the preservation of the natural environment and its prominent	2	The inability to directly experience an archaeological record allows only indirect engagement in various segments of social life with the only indirect potential for	1

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

CRITERIA	VALUE ANALYSIS: STARO ČIČE-GRADIŠČE	GRADES	VALUE ANALYSIS: KURILOVEC-BELINŠČICA	GRADES
	position in an otherwise flat landscape, significantly shaped by recent human influence, opens the possibility of including it into the local cultural and recreational offer that can be strengthened due to vicinity of Velika Gorica city.		development of economic value. At the same time, its vulnerability caused by modern infrastructure works, which damaged the natural environment, disables active and effective management as well as long-term sustainability.	
4	Because of its specific position, which represents a specific type of landscape usage in the defined space and time, it can be considered as an exceptional archaeological record with a small number of directly comparable archaeological remains. On the other hand, its value under this criterion will be dependent on the preservation of those parts of stratification which can be directly connected to the period of Late Bronze Age. However, studies conducted so far has shown that the record belonging to the younger phase of the period could be exceptionally well preserved.	3	In relation to the known Late Bronze Age remains it shows specificities comparable only to its smaller segment. It is an archaeological record with a certain number of comparable remains that together make the most visible and apparent trace of the early Urnfield culture in the region. For this reason, it cannot be considered as exceptional or unique, although certain specifics of record gives the possibility of its further evaluation under this criterion.	2
5	Even though it cannot be claimed that Late Bronze Age archaeological record at Staro Čiče has a synchronic context it is most likely that it will be determined by further research. On the other hand, it is a part of the record created through continuous deposition from Neolithic to the Middle Ages and has a high level of diachronic context. At the same time, the position makes a significant segment of the contemporary landscape with recognizable physical and historical geographic integrity.	3	Even though it cannot be claimed it has a synchronic context, it is most likely that it will be determined by further research. On the other hand, the presence of diachronic context, i.e. the remains from the Roman period on the same location, as well as connection with the physical features of the contemporary landscape, has been established, which opens the possibility of spreading the knowledge about the significance of position in wider spatiotemporal categories.	2
6	Because of its specific position in the landscape, it cannot be directly compared with other preserved and known archaeological remains in the	2	In relation to the known Late Bronze Age remains it shows specificities comparable only to its smaller segment. Because of that, it can be only considered as	2

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

CRITERIA	VALUE ANALYSIS: STARO ČIČE-GRADIŠČE	GRADES	VALUE ANALYSIS: KURILOVEC-BELINŠČICA	GRADES
	regional context. It cannot, therefore, be argued that it is a representative type of archaeological record containing significant characteristics of the period and region.		a partially representative type of archaeological record that appears in specific conditions as it is directly comparable only to certain part of preserved and known archaeological remains.	
7	Based on the studies conducted so far, it is characterized by the presence of Late Bronze Age remains at the place of primary deposition. It can also be argued that the wider area of the site has well preserved the spatial integrity and, excluding the activities which left traces that today are considered archaeological, recently it has not been subjected to more extensive harmful impacts.	2	Despite the intensive agricultural and infrastructure works that had a significant impact on the integrity of the area, it is possible to expect partially preserved the spatial integrity of the archaeological record, characterized by the presence of archaeological remains at the place of primary deposition.	2
8	The stratigraphic sequence shows an appropriate level of complexity with clear and legible stratigraphic relationships. The preservation of the diverse and numerous types of archaeological remains and the presence of those diagnostically relevant have been established as well as appropriate level of preservation of their original context.	3	In both cases, the stratigraphic sequence shows only a low level of complexity, but the good contextual correlation with diagnostically relevant and relatively well-preserved artefacts and ecofacts, which opens the possibility for conducting additional analyzes and filling in significant gaps in current knowledge.	2
9	The archaeological record shows an exceptional potential for providing data on the formal features of archaeological remains and their contextual relations and for drawing conclusions about the activities that caused its emergence. Therefore it can enable meaningful interpretations of the spatial and temporal dimensions of human activities conducted on the location in the period in question.	3	It shows the potential for obtaining data about the formal features of archaeological remains and their contextual and spatial relations. The limitation of the informational potential is caused by the poor linkage of stratigraphic units, which can, however, be supplemented by contextual analysis of artefacts and ecofacts that enables the derivation of chronologically relevant data.	2

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

CRITERIA	VALUE ANALYSIS: STARO ČIČE-GRADIŠČE	GRADES	VALUE ANALYSIS: KURILOVEC-BELINŠČICA	GRADES
10	It can be considered an especially significant archaeological record containing a clear interpretative potential with the ability to fill the gaps in current knowledge. At the same time, it has the potential to contribute to the study of wider landscape and to generate new insights about the period in question that have significance beyond regional boundaries.	3	It contains a significant potential for generating new knowledge about the past of the place and its surroundings and the potential for filling the gaps in current knowledge. This is especially pronounced in comparison with directly comparable archaeological records, particularly in relation to the open questions about the significance of the spatial position of a settlement and its relationship to contemporaneous archaeological remains.	3
TOTAL	HIGH-QUALITY RECORD	26	MEDIUM QUALITY RECORD	19

5 Conclusions

The necessity of the selection process imposes the need for value assessments that rank archaeological remains in order to identify their most informative part suitable for a long-term preservation. For this reason, it is necessary to develop appropriate assessment methods that will be able to meet these requirements, be adaptable and have the ability for application on newly discovered types of archaeological records. As the evaluation of the archaeological record does not only depend on its specific features, it must be based on a large number of parameters, depending on socially, spatially and temporally conditioned circumstances [21]. The possibility of comparing the professional value judgments of the archaeological record, which present the insight into their social meaning, patterns of their distribution and relative preservation, is the most important segment of creating value statements because it allows meaningful review and comparison of the results [7, 22–24]. Although it has been repeatedly shown that the evaluation based on predefined set of criteria can fulfil these requirements, the frame of reference according to which assessment is performed represents a key element of any meaningful evaluation process which ensures that evaluation of comparable archaeological records is always performed on the same basis. Therefore, the development of any evaluation method must be focused on the development of comprehensive reference systems, whose establishment exceeds the archaeological data collected and includes geomorphological characterization of the landscape as well as its ecological, visual and economic attributes.

As it was shown on two case studies which cover different types of Late Bronze Age settlements from the same region, the frame of reference in the process of evaluation represents the indispensable element of every method of value assessment.

It enables consistent consideration of different types of archaeological record with uniform references to different categories of value criteria. At the same time, it enables comparison of the results and argumentation of the established differences in values. Systematic implementation of such procedure can give a detailed overview of inventories of archaeological remains that can be used for determination of the suitable management system for archaeological heritage and as a basis for the development of guidelines in social and economic development planning. At the same time, the application of such a system aims, not only to enable a deeper understanding of specific types of archaeological remains, but also to provide the basis for development of predictive modelling and implementation of the systems of expected values in heritage evaluation as an essential prerequisite for the effective process of archaeological heritage management. On the other hand, both sites were analyzed according to the same frame of reference and taken as representative of the same type of archaeological remains. Any change in reference parameters (e.g. additional differentiation by period, type, boundaries, position etc.) could have a significant impact on the result of the evaluation. Because of that, it should be kept in mind that value estimates are always relative and dependent on our current knowledge which means that they never stand as independent conclusions but are always made in comparison with other relevant data.

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