

Information: Another Perspective on Cultural Heritage Management

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Abstract

The area of Prahova County, with all its values-cultural, social, and economic, allows approaching, in a widely accessible way, the connection between the investors' community and the institutions empowered in the protection of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is a concept in continuous expansion and development, which sometimes makes it difficult to identify components that need to be protected. How can I protect if I don't know what? Following the connection of conditioning how-how-when-why, this paper aimed to identify the role of information in this logical approach that overlaps with the directions of the approach to cultural heritage management. The research methodology focused on the analysis of preventive archaeological excavations carried out under commercial contracts between the Prahova Museum of History and Archeology and beneficiaries. It highlighted the main opportunities and challenges that rescue interventions may face, emphasizing the role of information beyond rules and procedures. Added value is given by the peculiarities of the investigated archeological sites, i.e the burial mounds from the Bronze Age attributed to the Yamnaya populations.

Keywords

information, Archaeological heritage, burial mound, management

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Introduction

Archaeologically protected areas include fragile elements in their perimeter, vulnerable to the use of space, so the range of human activities with a negative impact on them is very wide - agriculture, industry (exploitation), construction infrastructure, transport, utilities, services. In order to establish the priorities for the conservation of the archaeological heritage, it is necessary to know the answer to four questions: What needs to be protected? Where should it be protected? How should it be protected? By whom should it be protected? The lack of correct answers to these questions leads to ignoring the value of cultural heritage, to its destruction and loss, therefore, the most important step in saving and preserving it is good information.

Economic arguments can lead to the destruction of cultural heritage, but its economic evaluation can influence the decisions that cause this destruction (Ruijgrok, 2006). However, this assessment cannot be correct in the absence of calibration of instruments and units of measurement for the two components (Iorgulescu, Alexandru and Crețan, 2011), therefore, seen as an important source of income (Zbucnea, 2008), the cultural heritage benefits from double imposition of protection principles.

In Romania, the chapter on saving and protecting cultural elements has been reopened and supplemented countless times in recent years, either due to the strong impact of industrial and infrastructure

development or as a result of Romania's accession to various European and international conventions that aim at heritage protection.

1. Review of the scientific literature

The protection and conservation of cultural heritage components have gained new significance and have become an important research topic in the context of society's growing openness to the environment and its interest in cultural identity. The specialized literature focuses on the following main analytical dimensions - environment, economy, social impact, and cultural capitalization. In this context, the concept of cultural heritage can be identified either with "... the element that defines sensitively the antiquity and originality of the traditions of each human community" (Musteață, 2016, p.7) or with "... a good or set of patrimonial objects, a service, a program, activities in the service of the company or of some private groups, volumes of documents or studies. To attract customers, the product offered must comply with the needs and expectations of the public and/or the local community" (Zbucea, 2008, p.18). It has "... an open character, it is constantly evolving, adding discoveries in the archaeological, historical, ethnographic, artistic, scientific, as well as contemporary artistic, scientific and technical creations" (Oprîș, 2000, p. 22), which allows factors such as environmental damage, globalization, technological change and financial constraints to generate a complex concept. This is why "...the preservation of assets from the past has an objectively set limit - not everything can be preserved" (Iacob et al., 2012, p.58), which implies integrated management, the result of collaboration between economists and specialists in the field. "...the integrative vision of a site, meant to enhance and preserve, and sometimes even to restore the environment, the context, the subtle intertwining between the built environment and the natural environment" (Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 2013, p.9) complicating its management and calls for modern tools that need to be adapted to new situations. "The transition from a normative-objective approach to one based on the ability of an object to produce values and meanings that would lead society to consider it as cultural heritage" (Vecco, 2010, p. 324) is the phase of expansion of the concept which, from a socio-economic perspective, allows its identification as a common responsibility.

The vision of shared responsibility has brought the issue of cultural heritage to the attention of national (e.g. Presidential Commission for Built Heritage, Historic and Natural Sites) and international bodies that have drafted laws and conventions to define both this concept and establish principles and norms to protect him. Identifying itself as a major factor in defining Europe's identity and its place in the world, its cultural heritage and protection have become important policy areas of the European Union. This is reflected in numerous actions, projects, and strategies that establish regulatory frameworks, define concepts and outline directions (e.g. risk prevention, participatory governance), issue opinions and information reports, and organizes initiatives and events focused on the participation of civil society and citizens. By Decree no. 187/1990, Romania accepted the Convention on World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on November 16, 1972. Article 1 defines the notion of cultural heritage which represents "sites: works of man or works resulting from the combined actions of man and nature, as well as areas including archaeological lands that have an exceptional universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view". Seen as a resource for promoting social cohesion, diversity, a drive for innovation, sustainable growth, generating individual and community well-being, cultural heritage is supported by financial policies (e.g. EEA Grants 2014-2021).

The complexity of the cultural heritage, reflected in these works, is found in the management that its protection requires. Based on the principles enunciated by Petzet, of reversibility and authenticity, as a reflection of the main categories of interventions-maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, conservation, restoration (Petzet, 2000), cultural heritage management is differentiated by the directions that define the content of the object. The literature addresses the legal aspect of protection (Vieriu, 2021, Mauch-Messenger and Smith, 2014), protection through tourism (Frînculeasa and Chițescu, 2020; Pedersen, 2002), integration in the socio-economic context through public policies (Chițescu et al., 2019 Trosby, 2015; Barthel-Bouchier, 2012), as well as particular cases of historical monuments, archaeological sites or monumental cities (Frînculeasa et al., 2014).

Information is the link between us and the past, between cultural spaces, between losing and protecting. Capitalizing on information to protect cultural heritage is a strong point of effective management. Thus, "... the sustainable management of this resource with the help of new information technologies is a strategic option for the 21st century" (CEU, 2014).

2. Research methodology

Prahova County is a Romanian territory with a rich cultural heritage but at the same time a space where economic development is very dynamic. The economic structure is characterized by the domination of industry (about 50% of the entire economy of the county), complex and diversified (extractive industry, crude oil processing, and coking coal, food, beverage and tobacco industry, machinery and equipment industry). The economic stability of the county and its geographical position, the interest and involvement of the local public administration led to the boost of the local and regional business environment. Support structures have been developed by setting up industrial park structures (for example, Industrial Park Ploiești which has four locations developed on the outskirts of Ploiești, Ciorani, Urlați, Mizil), technological (for example, those near Ariceștii-Rahtivani, Păulești, Blejoi), business and logistics. Their impact on economic growth has been positive, not only by creating new jobs but also by expanding into less developed or declining areas. Starting from the premise that an adequate infrastructure is a dynamic factor for the development of the economy and the integration in the national and international markets, the Prahova and national administration contributed through the implemented and ongoing projects to the creation or improvement of this component - transport infrastructure, public utilities. New residential buildings appear (for example, the permits issued for residential buildings in Prahova County, in September 2021, hold a share of 2.9% of the total permits for residential buildings in Romania, i.e. the 11th place - INSS) and the process of restoration and modernization.

The economic size of the territory is doubled by its cultural potential. In this context, information becomes the balancing factor between growth and conservation. Being part of this paradigm, archaeological research is the element that can easily define a model of cultural heritage management.

In this paper, the discussion focuses on the archaeological heritage, ie the Bronze Age burial mounds specific to the Yamnaya populations. This site type was chosen because the Yamnaya phenomenon covering the period between 3250/3100–2500 BC (Anthony, 2021; Alexandrov, 2021) is based on a certain socio-economic scaffolding, namely the mobility of populations with origins in Eurasia moving in successive stages, with different intensities, towards Central and South-Eastern Europe (Heyd, 2011; Frînculeasa et al., 2015). The landscape is similar to that of the Eurasian steppe, located on both sides of the Lower Danube valley, continuing with the Tisza river basin (Frînculeasa et al., 2015; Koledin et al., 2020), has provided a favorable environment for the pastoral economy. Therefore, its presence in the studied area is significant (Frînculeasa et al., 2017; Frînculeasa, 2021). Furthermore, the experience of the authors, especially archaeologist Alin Frînculeasa, in the process of investigating/protecting some archaeological sites in an imminent context of destruction due to the exploitation of the property on which it is located (industrial and residential constructions, exploitation of mineral aggregates, transport infrastructure) it is important. Research of 30 burial mounds in the last 15 years (out of a total of 70 such mounds researched in Muntenia and Oltenia in the last hundred years) (Frînculeasa et al., 2015a; Frînculeasa, 2021). Moreover, the impact that the natural elements characteristic of territory have on these human communities presupposes an obligatory stage in the evaluation of the structure and functionality of these ensembles. The circumscription of human, cultural, and natural elements in a multifunctional system leads to the application of inter-and transdisciplinary techniques and methods, an approach that becomes both beneficial and mandatory.

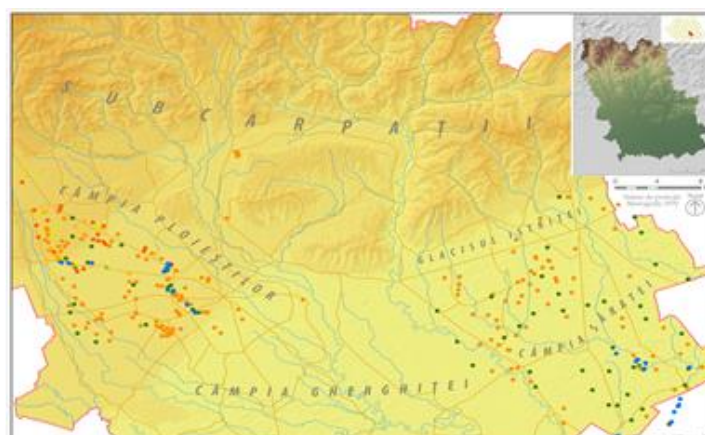


Figure no.1. Map of Prahova county (1) with the location of the mounds in the Ploiești Plain and the Sărata Plain (2)

The research methodology has a bivalent character and is the result of participatory analysis (over 30 archaeological projects), as well as documentation on legislation.

3. Results and discussion

Following the Yamnaya phenomenon through the perspective offered by the relationship between economic development and heritage conservation, we tried to answer the following questions:

What needs to be protected? By Government Ordinance no. 43/30 January 2000 on the protection of archaeological heritage and the declaration of archaeological sites as areas of national interest defines the area of priority archaeological interest as that area "comprising those archaeological sites whose scientific research, protection and enhancement are of exceptional importance for the history and the national culture, through the material testimonies, the movable or immovable goods" and which "is established on the territory of the administrative-territorial unit" of which it is part. In the case proposed for analysis, the archeological sites are the burial tombs from the Bronze Age, on the territory of Prahova County. The Yamnaya phenomenon is characterized by several characteristics: burials under mounds of earth, ocher deposits, a not very diversified inventory, rather austere, consisting of ornaments, vessels, weapons, rarely wooden ones. The assets identified by archaeological research indicate contacts over large areas made by knowing and frequenting older routes or opening new ones. Mobility was also explained by the absence of permanent settlements, but also by the presence in the graves of horses, small horses, and cattle specific to this way of life (Morgunova and Khokhlova, 2006).



Figure no. 2. Burial Standard (1) and Funeral Inventory of Yamnaya Research Tombs in Prahova County (2-7)

Source: Frinculeasa, 2019, p.131

How should it be protected? The field of archaeological cultural heritage requires an intersectorial approach and the development of scientific research activities to substantiate the various decisions on how to protect/save. The mounds, as morphological forms with average heights between 1.5-4m, are highlighted in the plain (Ploiești High Plain, Sărata Plain) or its contact area with the sub-Carpathian hills (Frinculeasa et al., 2017), can be approached for rescue/protection either by carrying out archaeological excavations in case they may be affected by economic activities (for example, mineral aggregates, foundation of some constructions, utility routes - gas, water) or by permanent monitoring when it is considered that they are not bothered by what is happening on the surface (for example, crops). Achieving an effective strategy, in this case, involves, as a sine qua non, the promotion of diversified forms of public-private partnerships (Grigorescu, 2008).

By whom should it be protected? By us, all. That's the simplest and most correct answer. In the case of Bronze Age tombs, the main actors are specialists, but in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, its competent institutions in the territory (Prahova County Directorate for Culture), and local public administration institutions (City Halls, Prahova County Museum of History and Archeology).

How can it be capitalized? The results of archaeological research can be exploited in situ, through museum exhibitions, by attending conferences, or by publishing scientific articles by the legal holders of primary information. The access of the general public can be virtual or through active participation in specially arranged places. Artifacts from Yamnaya burial mounds cannot be preserved in situ but may become, after preservation, elements of thematic exhibitions. The main artifact, i.e. the human skeleton, is not exposed for ethical and conservation reasons, but it benefits from numerous analyzes and appears in scientific publications.



Figure no. 3. Mounds from the southwest of Prahova county from Floresti and Aricești Rahtivani localities (1-2); aerial images with mound research methods from Târgșoru Nou (3) and Aricești Rahtivani (4)

The answers to these questions are the perspective through which the information was highlighted as an essential element of efficient management of the cultural heritage.

The archaeological research mentioned in this study is preventive (in Romania, after 2005 the number of preventive archaeological research constantly exceeds systematic research), resulting from commercial contracts between the Museum of History and Archeology Prahova and various beneficiaries, owners of the land on which they found the sites in a model of public-private partnership. This involves several aspects of the information:

- the archaeological sites were registered in the centralized system of the Ministry of Culture (Archaeological Repertory of Romania) as a result of the information sent from the territory through the site file;
- its introduction in PUZ/PUG to the localities through the exchange of information between decentralized institutions of the Ministry of Culture and City Hall;
- informing the landowners in case of requesting the land exploitation permits for the existence of the archaeological load;
- a partnership between specialists in the field (assigned to institutions such as museums, institutions, universities, private companies) and potential beneficiaries of an archaeological research service necessary to obtain the archaeological discharge permit;
- requesting an opinion for the archeological excavation to the National Commission of Archeology (as a body of the Ministry of Culture) regarding the new status of the archeological site.
- establishing an information flow between the County Directorate of Culture, the institution providing archaeological services, the Ministry of Culture, and the beneficiary.

The lack or alteration of the information in this cycle can lead to a wrong approach to the management of the situation that involves saving/protecting the archaeological heritage. In this regard, we can mention the location of the site according to the permanent updates of the National Agency for Cadaster and Real Estate Advertising on the property regime (for example, in a plot there is the possibility to have the site framed on several properties), professionalism in PUG execution/PUZ, mishandling of information by local public administration officials, circumvention of the owners' law, erroneous information present in the site file and ignorance or misinterpretation of the legislation, legal inaccuracies in issuing administrative acts.

Beyond these bureaucratic aspects, the management of an archeological site presupposes a correct approach to archeological excavation. The rescue of archaeological artifacts is, in essence, a good knowledge of the practice by the archaeologist who coordinates the research team. In such partnerships and civil contracts, the information must flow correctly between the two entities engaged in the rescue process - the team of specialists and the team of workers, together with the technical system - material available and the entire financing mechanism. Each excavation is unique, it does not represent the exact reproduction of anything already done, because it takes place in a certain space (m² area) appreciated by the information gained from previous experiences, in certain pedogeological and meteorological

conditions, has a well-defined goal that dictates some research limitations, moreover, are based on a non-permanent micro-organization, ie a team built temporarily to carry out the set of actions undertaken.

The peculiarity of the excavations of the tumular tombs is given by the respect for the one who represents the reason for carrying out the excavation, meaning elite of the Yamnaya populations who transited the space of today's Romania and left their mark on the cultural environment of that period. Any inventory item saved from these graves is a step closer to our knowledge as Europeans, so preserving objects and capitalizing on all the information obtained through laboratory investigations (DNA, C14, N13) are valuable.

The connection between man and the environment can be positively speculated in the sense of protecting it by extending the capitalization of the archaeological heritage. Analyzes are made that allow the issuance of prevention scenarios against water and climate phenomena. For the Yamnaya communities, late 4th and early 3rd millennium, the main environmental approaches are focused on paleoclimatic and paleoecological research, through pollen and paleobotanical study (Horváth et al., 2013), strontium isotope analysis $87\text{Sr}/86\text{Sr}$, oxygen $\delta 18\text{O}$, nitrogen and carbon $\delta 13\text{C}13$ (Gerling, 2015; Shishlina et al., 2009, 2012).

Cultivating and developing the feeling of cultural belonging by enhancing the cultural value of the archaeological heritage can be done through integrated management of information, through all the means now available to technology and the virtual environment of socialization. The ongoing dialogue between the community and state institutions is a necessity because communities must play a major role in preserving the local archaeological heritage. However, local perspectives, often focused on immediate well-being, differ from experts' views. This is also due to the discrepancy between policy rhetoric and the level of their implementation.

The natural hesitation between the relevance of the archaeological heritage for the well-being of individuals and communities and the benefits of economic development (especially job creation) must be constantly combated by policymakers, culturales managers, and professionals. In this context, reliable tools are needed to provide comprehensive information to support the fact that the value produced by investments in cultural heritage justifies the costs incurred. Even if the profit is not direct and immediate, the promotion of heritage can develop tourism, can increase the profit of cultural institutions, economic agents providing services, and therefore local budgets will have higher revenues that can be reinvested to increase the living standards of the population.

However, following the experiences, the authors noted that, in the context of sustainable development and the need to identify with a particular cultural space, the business community is gradually aware and accepts the need to implement a policy of protection of movable and immovable cultural heritage. The protection of cultural and archaeological heritage is no longer considered an area reserved exclusively for the state and the scientific community, but rather a common responsibility of several interest groups: researched companies, financial institutions, consumers, and the general public. The financial consequences and the risk of destroying the reputation of companies are important reasons for investors to comply with ethical standards and the protection of cultural heritage imposed by law.

However, the Romanian legislation regulating the protection of heritage is either not sufficiently known, it is ignored, or it is poorly transmitted by the employees of the local public administration, so that, practically, it is not used. In this context, the primary role of information is justified because it provides the two communities - the administration and investors with some regulations and models necessary for better facilitation of bureaucratic development that promotes the approach to saving heritage.

Rehabilitation of cultural institutions by capitalizing on the entire heritage of which it benefits requires time and money. The national and international visibility of artifacts can turn a museum into a multi-sectoral policy tool, but the coordination and convergence of resources towards research is not yet a priority.

The information is based on the understanding of the managerial approach regarding the protection of cultural heritage and its value. The choice and the indicative balance of its promotion as an important factor in the correct and efficient management of the cultural heritage are based on the aspects identified and presented in the paper. Summarized, they are:

- explaining the need for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage;
- knowledge of the main national and international bodies with concerns in the field of protection and conservation of the cultural-archaeological heritage, as well as of the main protection and conservation programs at the national level;

- the correct knowledge and understanding by investors of the meaning of the notions with the most frequent use in the field of cultural heritage conservation;
- identification of the impact vectors of human activities on the cultural-archeological components from the area of Prahova county, especially the proximities of Ploiesti Municipality;
- bringing the archaeological heritage close to the public's understanding by knowing the methodological path of interdisciplinary research;
- promoting good practices in investment development as solutions to reduce heritage damage.

Conclusions

Cultural heritage management is a complex process, but a delicate one to approach in some respects. The information is identified as a vector of balance between the primary needs of a constantly evolving society (construction, transportation, and security) and a dynamic but fragile cultural heritage, through the authors' experience with archaeological research of Bronze Age burial mounds. This approach to information allows a new perspective on the management of archaeological heritage that can be traced through studies aimed at another type of heritage (e.g. architectural heritage) or other cultural spaces (e.g. Transylvania or Dobrogea). The evolution of cultural demand on an upward trend justifies investments in the field of heritage, but which must be made efficiently, with respect for all components of the environment and while maintaining the benefits offered by this company with high economic values. The limits of the research are due to the analyzed model, both as a space and as elements of the national archaeological heritage - the Yamnaya mound in Prahova County. The issue of archaeological cultural heritage (especially that which cannot be preserved in situ or spectacular as artifacts) is complex not only due to the cultural phenomenon, but also to the superficial legislation and general understanding. That is why the study offers the perspective of conducting similar research on some archaeological sites with a much greater cultural impact on the collective mind or those involved in restoration and capitalization projects.

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