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DIFFICULT HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN SLOVENIA

(Težavna dediščina in arheologija v Sloveniji)

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Avgusta, d.o.o.

Conference “THE RIGHT TO HERITAGE AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Konferenca “PRAVICA DO DEDIŠČINE KOT SPODBUDA ZA TRAJNOSTNI RAZVOJ”

11. 9. 2021

Introduction

- Difficult heritage
- Slovenian difficult heritage
- Concealed gravesites
- Concealed gravesites – archaeological experience
- Case studies
- Conclusion



Difficult Heritage

Heritage associated with battlefields, cemeteries, mass graves, executions, concentration and prison camps, prisons, places of suffering and death, etc.

„Different than any other type of heritage, material remains of crimes are difficult to approach. It is emotionally and often politically charged material and frequently evokes personal feelings, making it subjective and difficult to interpret. It also raises radical attitudes, from full acceptance to total rejection – depending on the social context, and the horizon of experience and expectations“ (Zalewska *et al.* 2017, 16).

„Yet ignoring, silencing or destroying are not always options – and the awkward past may break through in some form“ (Macdonald 2009, 3).



Slovenian difficult heritage

- First World War (1915-1917):
 - cemeteries and individual graves
 - POW
 - death and suffering of civilian population (e.g. Lucy Christalnigg, executions at Idrsko)
- Period between World Wars (1918-1940):
 - Italian annexation of Slovenian territory (oppression of Slovenians)
- Second World War (1941-1945):
 - concentration camp „Loibl-Süd“
 - prisons and POW camps
 - individual and mass executions / gravesites
- Post-war era (1945-1946):
 - POW camps
 - individual and mass executions / gravesites
- War of Independence (1991)

Concealed gravesites

- Victims of occupying forces and their collaborators - well documented and part of the „memoryscape“
- Victims of partisan forces and post war communist regime – concealed and pushed out of the collective memory (until 1991)
- Sites of individual and mass executions and graves of partisans' military and political opponents

Concealed gravesites – archaeological experience

- First exhumation in 1991 (Zakovški gozd pri Zaplani)
- 57 documented locations until 2007, more than 600 until 2011
- Today: more than 700 individual and mass graves
- 2003 – first exhumation using „archaeologically comparable method“
- 2006 onwards – regular inclusion of archaeologists and physical anthropologist at exhumations
- Personal involvement of the author from 2016 onwards: at least 25 research cases

Concealed gravesites – archaeological experience

- Reasons behind the exhumations:
 - Ethical reasons – everybody deserves a proper burial
 - Sanitary reasons – human remains can't lay on the surface or in caves
 - Rescue excavations – construction works are a threat to gravesites
 - Providing a proper military burial for the fallen soldiers – Geneva convention
 - Personal (family) reasons – search for the missing relatives

Case studies

Concealed gravesites:

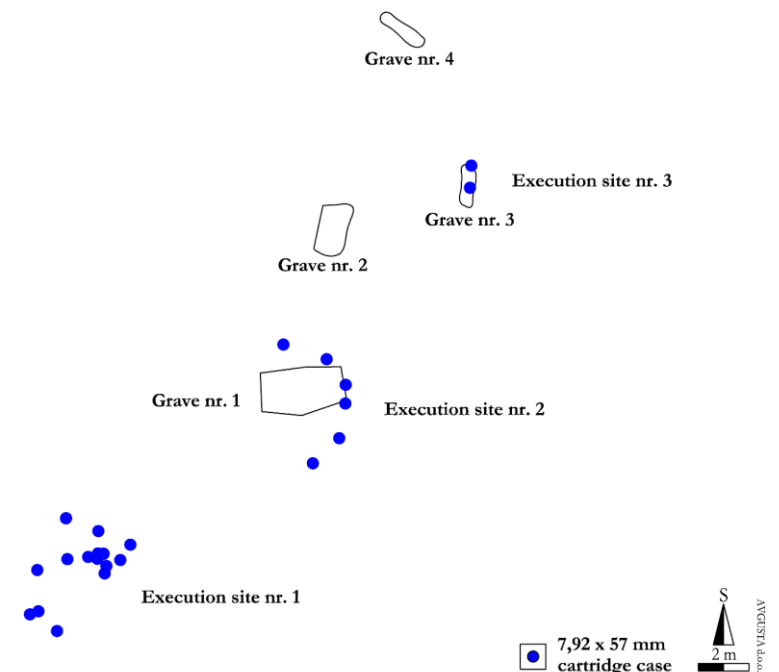
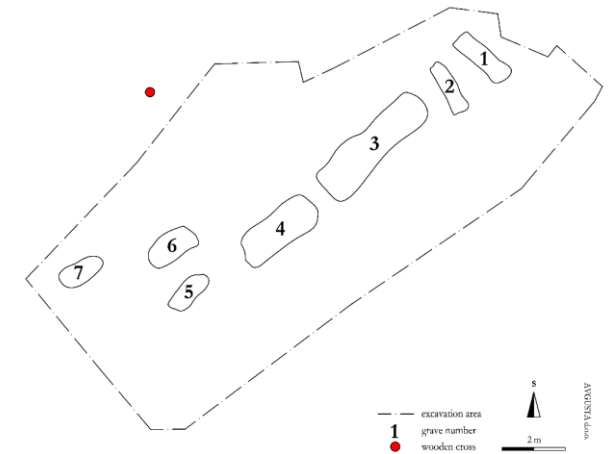
- Romani graves in Iška and Boncarji
- Brezno 3
- Mostec
- Šembije
- Spodnje Gorje

Execution sites:

- Kočevski rog execution sites
- Cave at Debliške livade

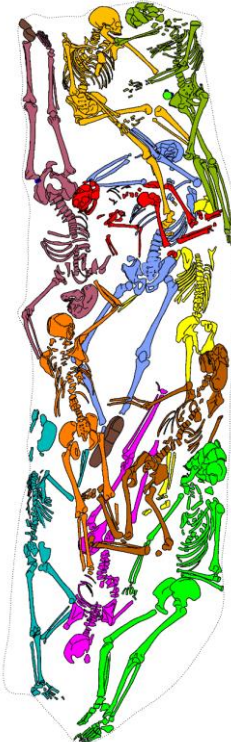
Iška and Boncarji

- 17. 5. 1942 (Iška)
 - 7 graves: 53 victims; 2 dogs; 27 adults; 2 adolescents (15-17 years), 24 children (1-14 years); 1 foetus
- End of May 1942 (Boncarji)
 - 4 graves: 20 victims; 2 dogs; 9 adults; 11 children (0,5-14 years)



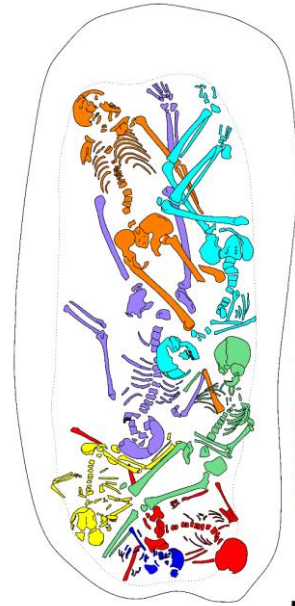






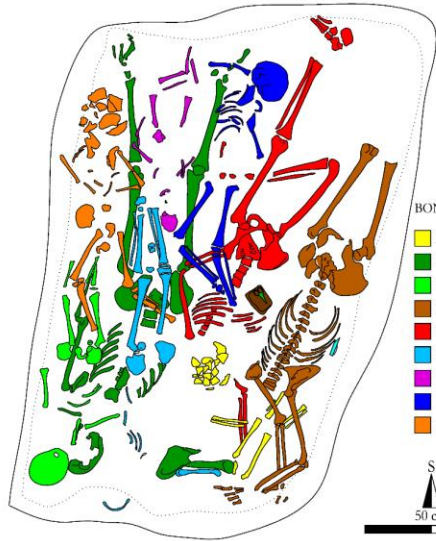
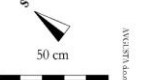
IŠKA - GRAVE NR. 3
UPPER LAYER

- Individual nr. 4
- Individual nr. 5
- Individual nr. 6
- Individual nr. 10
- Individual nr. 11
- Individual nr. 12
- Individual nr. 13
- Individual nr. 14
- Individual nr. 15
- Individual nr. 25
- Individual nr. 29
- Glass
- Metal



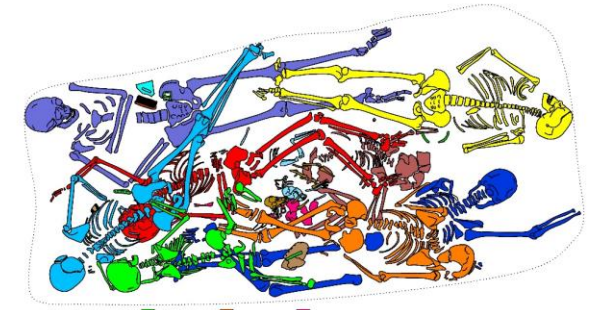
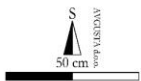
IŠKA - GRAVE NR. 4
BOTTOM LAYER

- Individual nr. 17
- Individual nr. 19
- Individual nr. 21
- Individual nr. 22
- Individual nr. 30
- Individual nr. 36
- Individual nr. 40

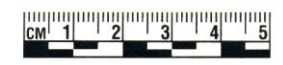
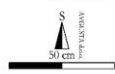


BONCAR - GRAVE NR. 2

- Individual nr. 11
- Individual nr. 12
- Individual nr. 13
- Individual nr. 14
- Individual nr. 15
- Individual nr. 16
- Individual nr. 17
- Individual nr. 18
- Individual nr. 19

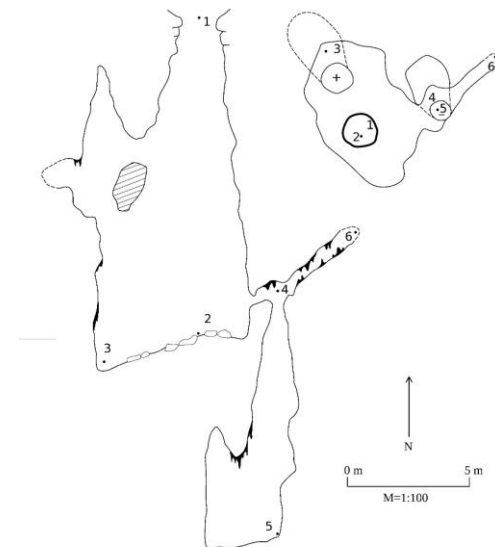


SKELET 2 SKELET 7 SKELET 20
SKELET 3 SKELET 8
SKELET 4 SKELET 9 PIS 1
SKELET 5 SKELET 10 PIS 2



Brezno 3 (Kočevski rog)

- Execution after 18. 5. 1945
- Discovered in 2020
- At least 258 individuals
- Civilians and POW
- 2 separate executions



Vizure			
Točke	Dužina	Smjer	Naklon
1-2	13	0	-90°
2-3	4	338°	-17°
2-4	3,7	71°	38°
4-5	10	0	-90°
4-6	4	48°	37°

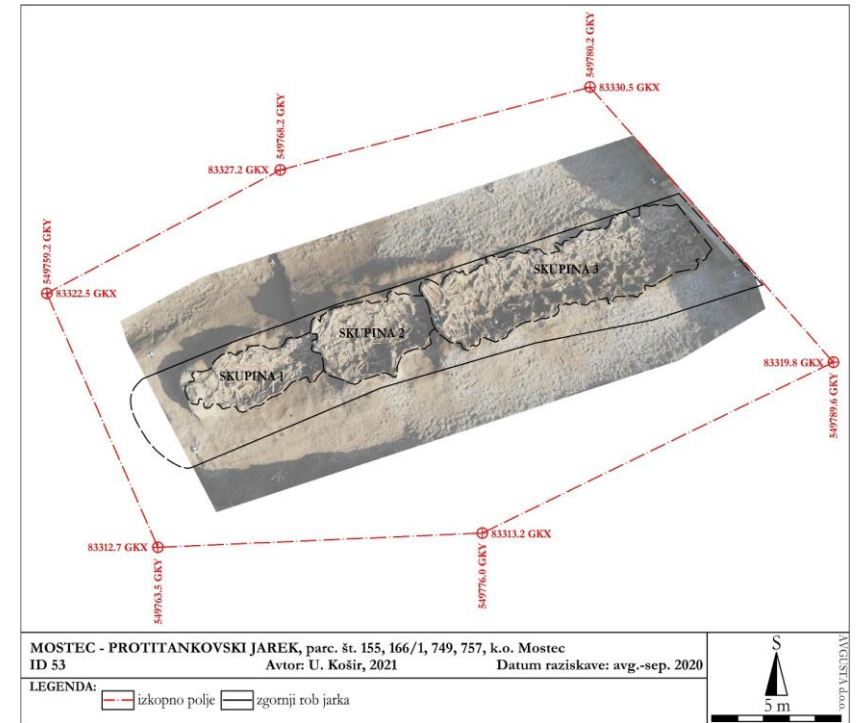
Brezno 3 pri grobišču	
Projekat:	Črti Bučar, Zvonka Janežič
Godina:	10. 7. 2020
Način:	Zvonka Janežič
Godina:	13. 7. 2020
Opis objekta:	JK Novo mesto
Skala:	1:100
Projektor:	III B
Podloga:	





Mostec

- After the war (1945)
- 3 separate groups of victims – 3 separate executions
- Civilians and POW
- Partly excavated
- 278 victims

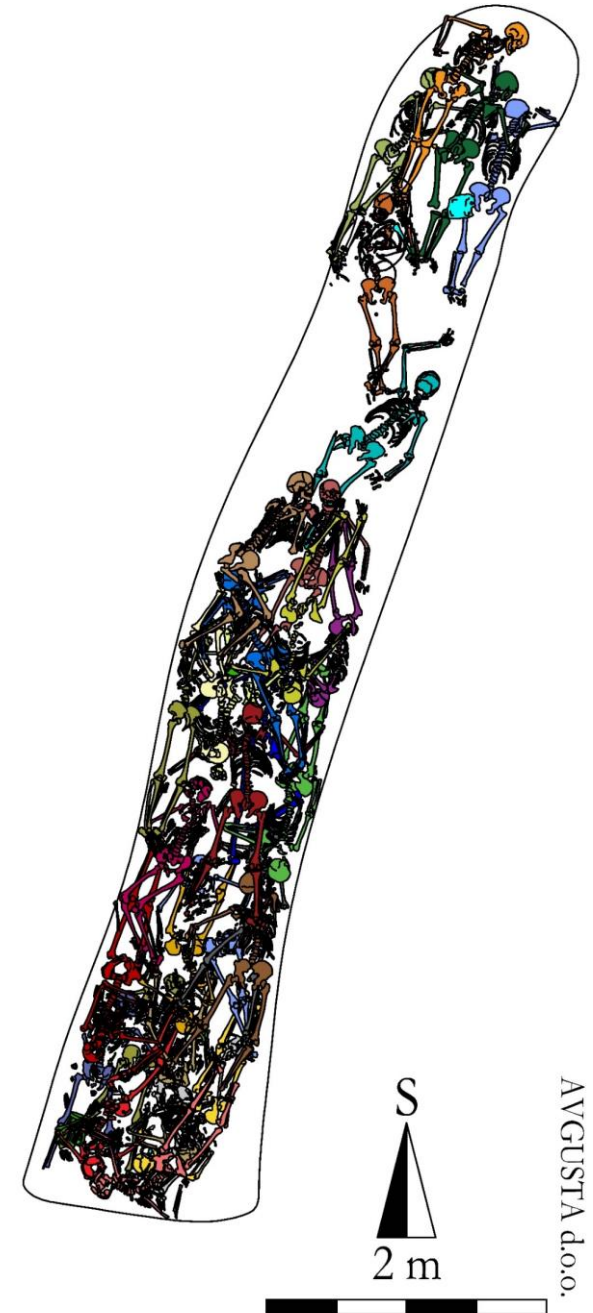


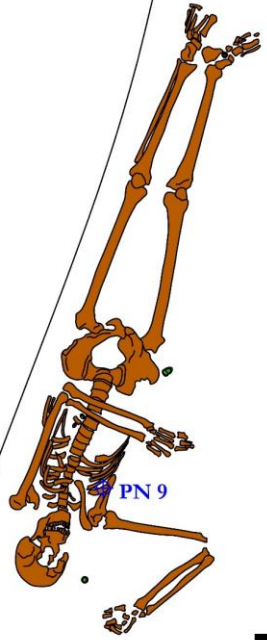




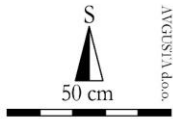
ŠEMBIJE

- 31 German soldiers
- Fallen in battle
- German War Graves Commission
(Volksbund Deutsche
Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.)

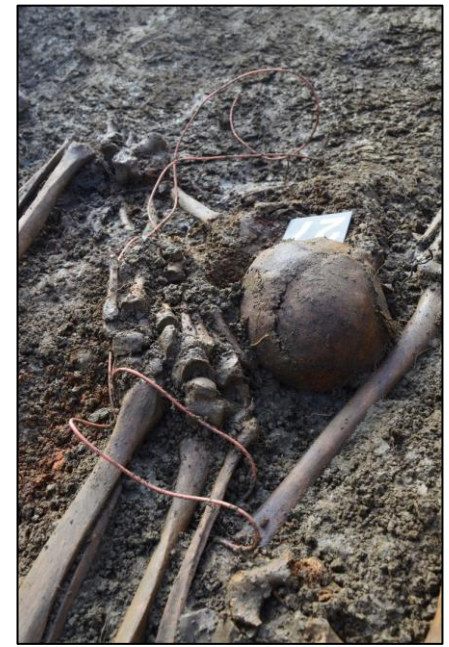


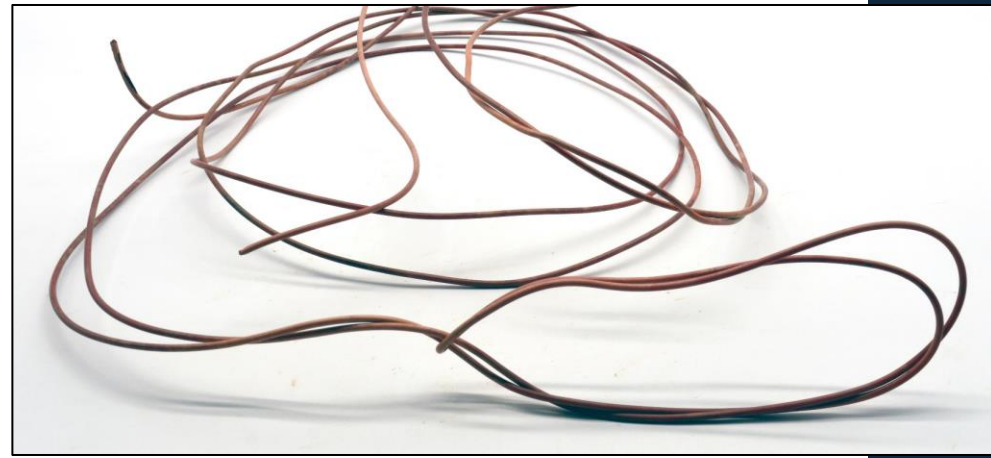


Skelet 4



AVGUSTINIA DOBROVA





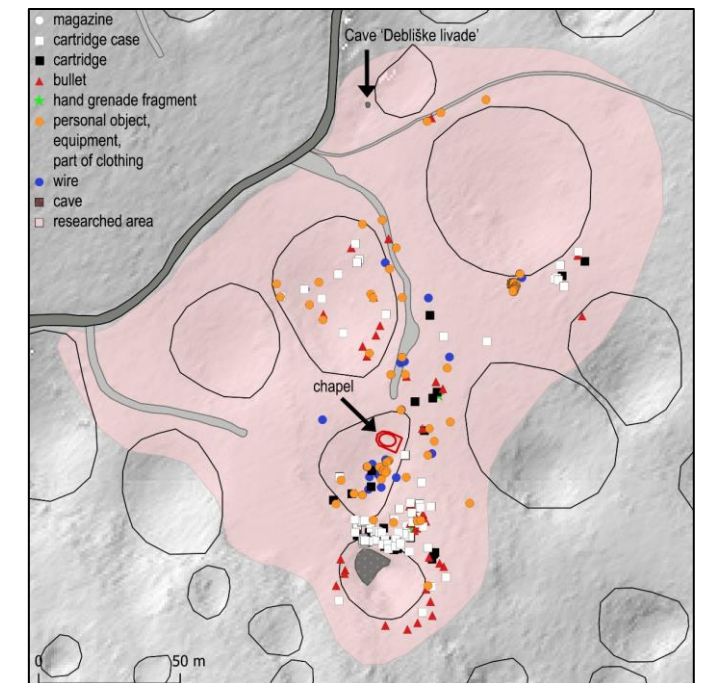
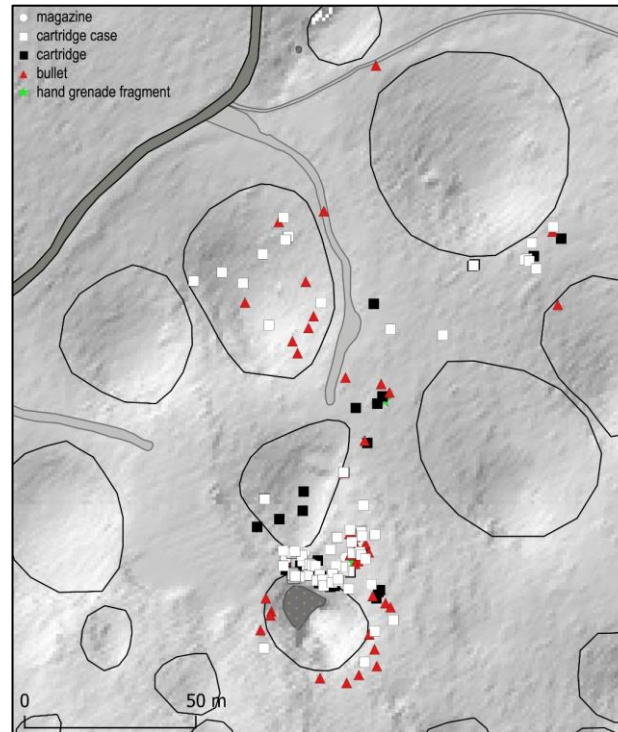
SPODNJE GORJE

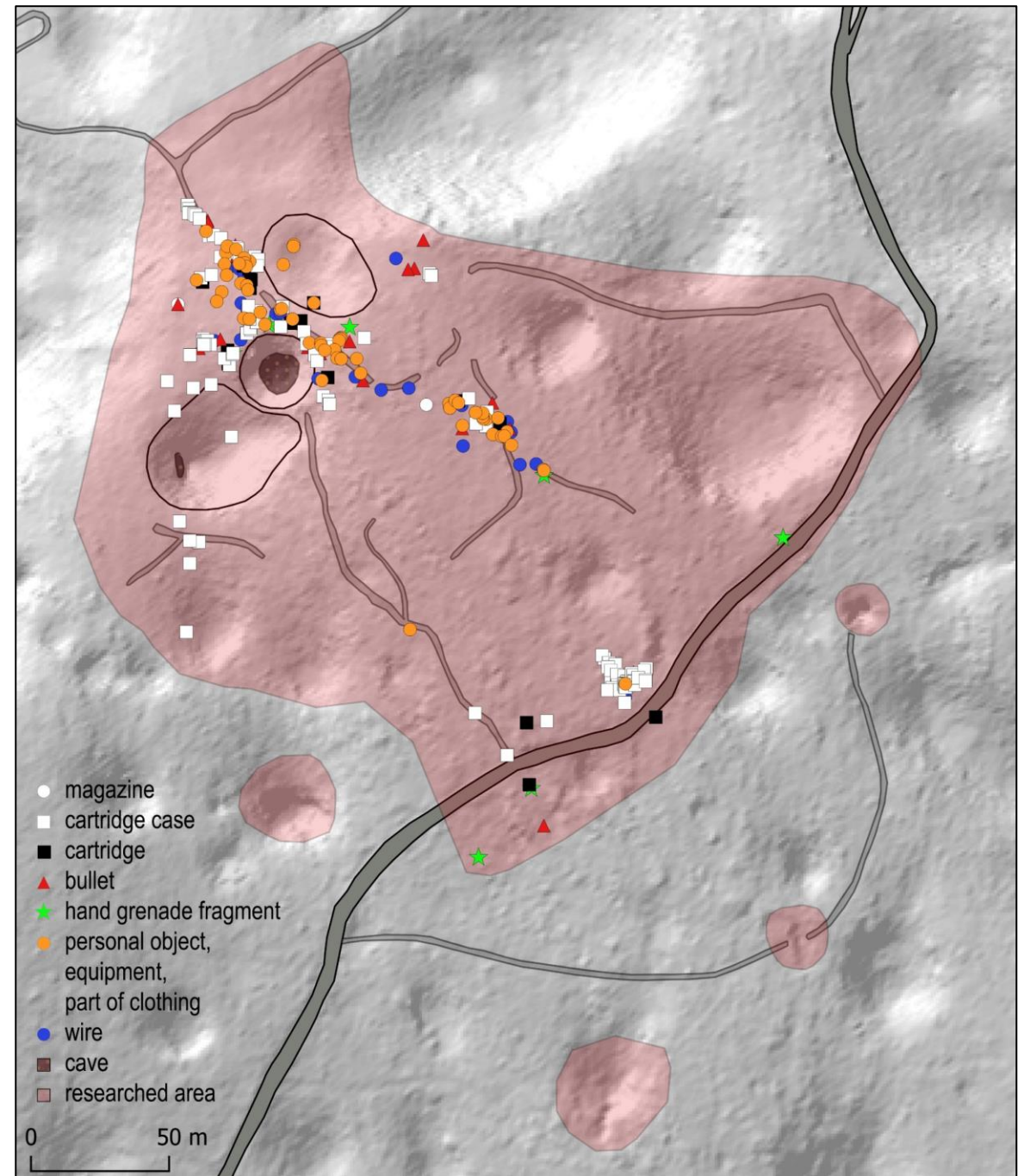
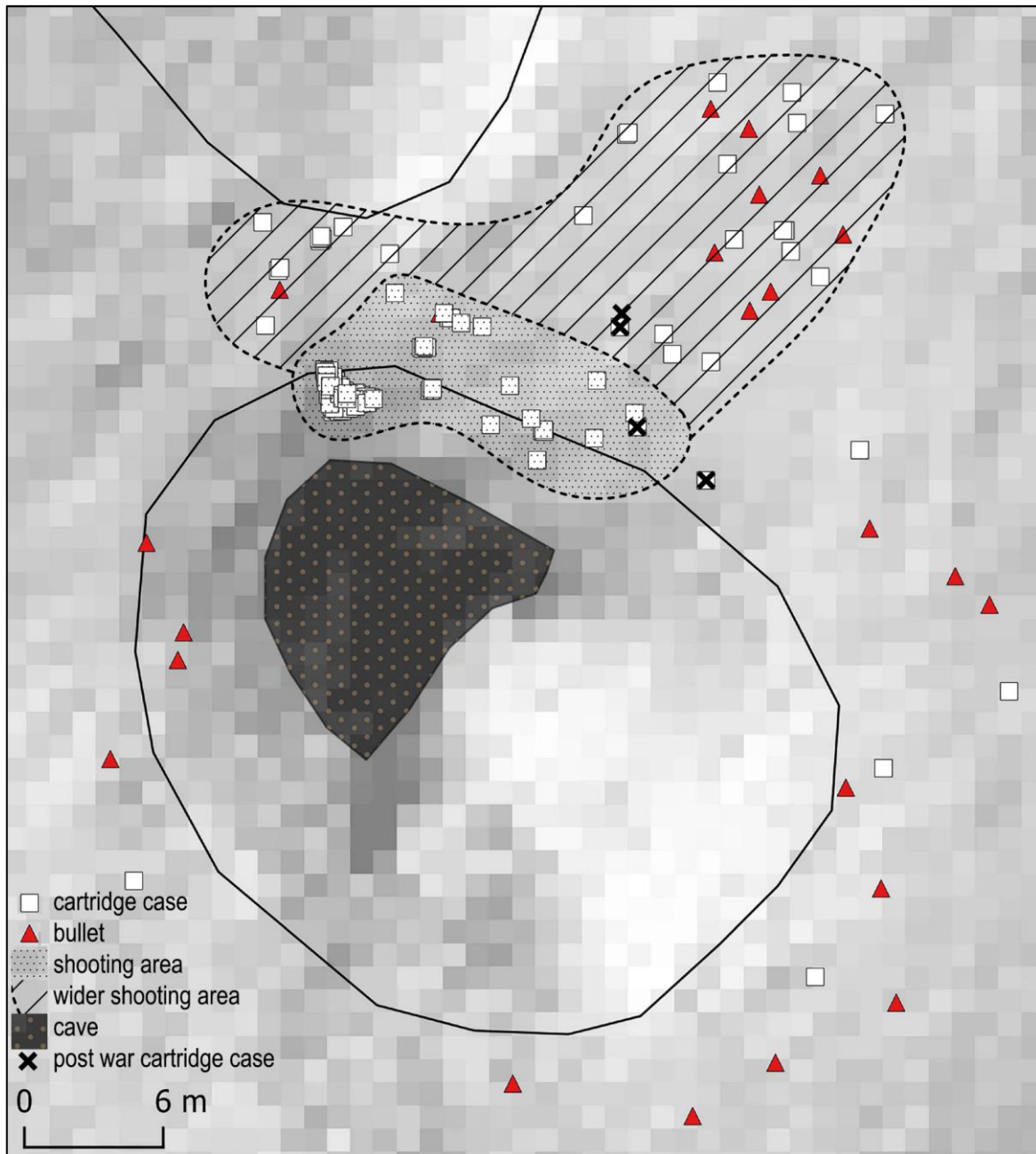
- 1 soldier (suicide?)



Kočevski rog execution sites

- Metal detector survey
- 4 execution sites (Jama pod Macesnovo gorico, Jama pod Krenom, Jama v Rugarskih klancih, Dvojno brezno pod Cink križem)
- Reconstruction of events and places of different activities





Debliške livade

- More than 2000 objects
- 9,5 kg of molten aluminum objects
- 14,5 kg of unrecognizable metal objects
- Origin of the victims – based on discovered objects





1 ПУШКАР 2 ДОВОСТАНИЊ

3 ПУШКАР Т.В.Н.Ш.Ш.Ш

4 Stoković Josip 5 FARMAN

6 BM 7 MS 8 MUSIĆ M

9 Ш.Б.Ш.П

10 ALE LEONE ALFANI

1 1920 D AF MAGLIANO

2 [Diagram of a rectangular object with internal grid lines]

3 [Diagram of a bird-like figure]

4 БОРИВОЈЕС ПАЗАРЕВИЊ

5 PM Schkribamek Stefan

6 [Diagram of a square with an X inside]

7 AU UNTR

8 F1 A F Kreis zuzeler

Difficult heritage – heritage of death and suffering or also a heritage of life?



CONCLUSION

Dark Heritage are not only sites, but also other tangible and intangible remains such as objects and memories of the survivors and their descendants, which speak not only of human suffering and death, but also of their lives

Archaeology plays an important role in researching, interpreting and understanding Slovenia's difficult heritage

Archaeological research helps to preserve material remains and to gain important data of dark past for the future generations



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union