

Published 2010  
by **Culture Lab Editions**,  
Elisabethlaan 4 B-3080 Tervuren  
Belgium  
[www.culturelab.be](http://www.culturelab.be)

ISBN 978-2-9600527-7-0

Produced on behalf of Archaeology in  
Contemporary Europe: Professional Practices  
and Public Outreach.

Designed by Pascale Coulon

Copyright © CultureLab and individual authors

This publication has been produced with the  
support of the European Commission (through  
the Culture 2007-2013 programme) in the  
framework of the ACE project – “Archaeology  
in Contemporary Europe. Professional Practices  
and Public Outreach”.

The European Commission cannot be held  
responsible for any use which may be made  
of the information contained herein.

All contributors to this publication have done  
so in their personal capacity. The views and  
analyses expressed here remain their authors' sole  
responsibility, and do not necessarily reflect or  
represent those of the publishers, the sponsoring  
organisations, their institutions or the European  
Commission.

CULTURE LAB ÉDITIONS



Cover Photo: Archaeologists defending higher  
education, research and employment (Paris,  
January 2009, photo: Nathan Schlanger).

Download PDF file at:

<http://ace-archaeology.eu/fichiers/25Archaeology-and-the-crisis.pdf>

# **ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS**

**MULTIPLE IMPACTS,  
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Edited by Nathan Schlanger  
and Kenneth Aitchison

# 1. Introduction. Archaeology and the global economic crisis

**Nathan Schlanger**  
**Kenneth Aitchison**

Nathan Schlanger  
ACE project – ‘Archaeology in  
contemporary Europe’  
Institut national de recherches  
archéologiques préventives, Paris  
[nathan.schlanger@inrap.fr](mailto:nathan.schlanger@inrap.fr)

Kenneth Aitchison  
Head of Projects and Professional  
Development,  
Institute for Archaeologists, UK  
[kenneth.aitchison@archaeologists.net](mailto:kenneth.aitchison@archaeologists.net)

This is probably the first multi-authored attempt to take a global, or at least international, look at the current economic crisis and its effects on archaeology. Archaeologists of course have always shown much professional interest in crises, even if only from a distance. There have been as we know many and varied crises throughout human history: natural disasters such as earthquakes, flash floods or droughts, or human-created famines, epidemics, and wars have all left tangible traces in the archaeological record, subject to much research and numerous interpretations. Economic crises for their part are probably more difficult to identify in the record: what can be found of the 1630s tulipmania speculative bubble in Holland, of the commercial blockades of the Napoleonic wars, or indeed of the Wall Street collapse of 1929? But while economic crises may be elusive to grasp as archaeological events and processes in the remote past, they are certainly impossible to miss when, as has been the case since 2008, they hit the profession at full force. Unmistakable as they may be, however, the effects of the current economic crisis on archaeology still need to be detailed, elaborated, and analysed – this, broadly speaking, is what the present volume begins to do.

At the onset, it has not seemed to us necessary to propose here any strict or even encompassing definition of the crisis. In the current context, everyone will readily gather that we are talking about this sharp economic recession that settled over much of the world, following a series of catastrophic financial events that began to unfold in the United States in 2007. The overexposure of many banks there in lending to ‘subprime’ borrowers led to an unprecedented financial shock to the entire economic system across the western world, which has continued – in differing forms – until the present day. Most contributors provide further details regarding their respective countries and sectors, including quantitative information and projections, without for that transforming their texts into macro-economic dissertations. In fact, alongside the sheer mass of data and numbers, it is striking to note just how rapidly has this notion of ‘global economic crisis’ become something of a collective representation, a shared syndrome, a fateful mantra that leaves much leeway for interpretation, extension or application. Without delving here too deeply into the socio-linguistics or semantics of the term ‘crisis’, the politics of its uses nevertheless call for comment. As it permeates both ordinary and professional discourse, this notion finds itself expediently and strategically employed: in the name of the crisis, sometimes by its mere mention, actions are legitimised, decisions are delayed, expectations are raised, plans shelved, procedures reconfigured, pills sweetened, plugs pulled and so forth.

So while the ‘crisis’ is emphatically here with us (at least for the foreseeable future) we really cannot take its presence and its implications at face value without some prior critical consideration or contextualisation. This applies to all of us in general, as citizens, as voters and as taxpayers, but also specifically to the fields of archaeology and archaeological heritage management that concern

us. Firstly, we need to remember that many different patterns and processes have been going on *before* the crisis. A truism this may be, we still need to acknowledge, however briefly and partially, that such antecedents help us set the crisis in perspective and better understand its impacts. That the countries described in this volume each have their different archaeological traditions, systems and configurations is something we all know – it can however be novel and illuminating to appreciate these differences through the singular prism of the crisis. Together with that, we need also to consider what goes on *alongside* the crisis. While the current events focus our immediate concerns, it would be far too easy for us – and indeed for our elected representatives, our political and economical decision makers – to refer and defer all choices and policies to the crisis. Alongside continuities or attempts to return ‘back to normality’ in heritage management, we can also expect some broad changes and reorientations to occur, which their instigators may claim to be simply accelerated, facilitated or indeed rendered inevitable by the crisis. This may well be so, but it is our responsibility, as the professionals directly involved, to remain alert and examine these changes for their worth on a case-by-case basis.

As can be seen, the crisis is indeed a complex matter, the impacts of which upon archaeology are likely to be multiple and far-reaching – on the practice of the discipline, on its practitioners, and ultimately on the knowledge we produce and disseminate about the past. Our guiding hypothesis (as presented at the EAA session that is at the origin of this publication) is that to a greater or lesser extent, all sectors of archaeology will ultimately be affected. This has led us to distinguish, with admittedly a certain degree of arbitrariness as well as overlap, between four major themes or impact areas. For each, we raise a series of issues or possibilities, which could, when substantiated, generate further thought and discussion.

– The first theme concerns the impact of the crisis on *research funding and priorities*. We would like to know whether the budgets dedicated to research (be they structural or project based, in universities or research bodies) have been affected by the crisis, in terms of available funding, evaluation criteria, types of projects selected, eligible expenditures, etc.

– The second theme, which has initially attracted the most attention for obvious reasons, concerns the impact of the crisis on *professional employment*. Here the issues are of employment, job security, recruitment and redundancies (notably in commercial archaeology). This in turn relates to the health and prospects of various archaeological employers, in both public and private sectors. A further issue concerns professional training and skills, by higher education institutions and by employers – and how they are to be maintained in times of crisis.

– The third theme, which proves perhaps too early to fully grasp, has to do with the impact of the crisis on *conservation and public outreach* policies. This concerns not only the fate of archaeological documentation and finds, as studied, curated and stored by field workers or by museums, but also that of the various activities (personnel, publications, exhibitions etc) which are aimed at communication and public outreach – at a time when the broader public’s interest in the past and its value may need to be reassessed.

– The fourth theme has to do with the impact of the crisis on *heritage management, policies and legislation*. In question here are the various structural, policy and legal modifications that follow from – or are amplified, accelerated, or alternatively delayed by – various official or governmental responses to the crisis. These include changes in the legal definition of ‘archaeological sites’, changes in

the intensity, monitoring, timing or funding of protective measures, the merging of heritage management institutions or their functions, the effects of economic ‘new deals’ and re-launch initiatives, etc.

With different degrees of detail, the contributors to this volume have addressed these four themes, providing the reader with an in-depth comparative picture of the multiple impacts of the global economic crisis on archaeology. In the case of archaeology in the United Kingdom, the themes in question are actually dealt with in several papers: mainly employment-related issues by Kenneth Aitchison in his chapter and in annex I, research and higher education by Anthony Sinclair, and matters pertaining to legislation and heritage management by Roger Thomas in annex II. In other cases, the contributors have touched on all themes in their papers: Arkadiusz Marciniak and Michał Pawleta for Poland, Nathan Schlanger and Kai Salas Rossenbach for France, and more succinctly James Eogan for Ireland. Most contributors have focused on a particular sector, broadly speaking that of archaeological heritage management. This is either because, in comparison with the other impact areas, the evidence was particularly rich or topical in that sector – as in the paper by Monique van den Dries, Karen Waugh and Corien Bakker on the Netherlands, and that by Eva Parga-Dans on Spain – or because there were useful quantitative or qualitative leads to follow, as did Asya Engovatova for Russia, Eszter Bánffy and Pál Raczky for Hungary, or Jeffrey Altschul for the United States.

Whatever the case, this volume as a whole focuses mainly on matters relating to archaeological heritage management. Interestingly, this focus is conveyed through a range of largely overlapping terms used by the contributors: many talk of ‘preventive archaeology’, and others mention ‘rescue archaeology’, the ‘industrial sector’, ‘commercial archaeology’, ‘cultural resources management’, ‘developer-funded’, ‘compliance driven’, and indeed ‘professional’ as distinct (?) from ‘academic’ archaeology. We considered it important, as editors, to respect this terminological variability, which in some cases reflects some real conceptual or even ideological differences, but which also rests on a common underlying basis – which can be conveyed by the relatively clear and neutral term of Malta archaeology. This common orientation towards archaeological heritage management is of course related to the areas of competencies and interest of the contributors themselves, but even more so to the fact that it is at present at the archaeological forefront of the current economic crisis. Building on national legislations that have been reinforced over the past 20 years – themselves based on the Council of Europe’s 1992 ‘Malta’ or ‘Valletta’ European Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (see [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/Archeologie/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/Archeologie/default_en.asp)) as well as the ICAHM – ICOMOS 1990 Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (<http://www.icomos.org/ica hm/documents/charter.html>) – archaeological heritage management has been a continuously growing sector in terms of economic activity, employment and productivity – one that risks now feeling the full force of the crisis. It is also a sector that captures some of the social and political choices surrounding our attitudes to our heritage and to the past, as Jean-Paul Demoule indicates in his opening paper, and as Nathan Schlanger re-examines in the postscript.

Two additional comments to conclude this introduction. First, it might be pertinent to reiterate here the usual disclaimers. Rather than obtain formal, authorised statements, our aim here has been to gain a sense, qualitative or quantitative, of

the stakes and the problems areas raised by the crisis. All the contributors to this volume, whether they come from academia, the commercial sector, or state bodies, are certainly knowledgeable about the situation prevailing in their countries, but they do not pretend, and nor are they expected, to present anything like an official, sectorial or national viewpoint.

Next, as we noted at the onset, this volume represents something of a first. But it may well not be a one-off. Provided that sufficient interest and goodwill can be found, we envisage the publication – perhaps in a year's time, for the next EAA meeting in September 2011 – of a second volume in which information will be updated and commented on, and of course new countries, sectors and impact areas represented and analysed.

Please do contact the editors if you are interested in contributing to this publication and its aims.