

Archaeology and the global economic crisis

**Multiple impacts,
possible solutions**

Edited by Nathan Schlanger
and Kenneth Aitchison

Abstracts in english

1. Introduction. Archaeology and the global economic crisis

Nathan Schlanger & Kenneth Aitchison

This volume, and the EAA 2009 session from which it developed, represent the first multi-authored attempt to take a global look at the current economic crisis and its effects on archaeology. In addition to the reality of its effects, the 'crisis' has rapidly become a commonly understood concept, strategically used to enable or legitimise decisions in archaeological heritage management. It is worth remembering that various patterns and processes have been going on before the crisis, and continue in parallel with it. Four main themes or impact areas of the crisis on archaeology are discussed: research funding and priorities; professional employment, training and skills; conservation and public outreach; and finally changes in heritage management policies and legislation. As a developing sector, archaeological heritage management has been hit particularly hard by the economic recession, but it is also a sector that can reveal much – especially in times of crisis – regarding the wider attitudes of our contemporary societies towards the past and our heritage.

2. The crisis – economic, ideological, and archaeological

Jean-Paul Demoule

Since its creation, the EAA has served as a forum for debates on different approaches to the organisation of archaeological heritage management in Europe. Two main approaches can be distinguished. In one, it is the nation state, representing the community of citizens, that takes charge over the protection of the archaeological heritage, either through a state archaeological service or through dedicated public bodies. In the other model, the archaeological heritage is considered as a merchandise or a service, where commercial archaeological units are at the service of their clients, the developers, with only the postulation of some 'code of ethics' to ensure quality control in the overall framework of the free market economy. Such an approach has been recently attempted in France, with the recent accreditation of commercial companies as licensed operators in preventive archaeology. However, the current economic crisis clearly invites a rethinking of this idea. The state, once 'part of the problem', is now recognised as a possible solution. Without massive state interventions, a large part of the global economic and financial structure would have fared much worse. Likewise in archaeology, a considerable number of private units have been crippled or even forced to fold since the onset of the economic crisis, putting in jeopardy archaeological operations, as well as documentation and publications. Here then is a good opportunity for the archaeological community as a whole to take renewed stock of its responsibilities and perspectives.

3. The Impact of the Recession on Archaeology in the Republic of Ireland

James Eogan

Archaeological services in the Republic of Ireland are provided by a state-supervised private sector. From the mid-1990s this sector experienced sustained growth in both the volume of work commissioned by public and private-sector clients and the numbers of archaeologists employed. Between 1995 and 2002 the numbers of excavations carried out increased annually by 30% on average; from 2003 to 2007 the number of excavations carried out stabilised above 1,500 per annum. By 2007 it was estimated that approximately 1,000 archaeologists were employed. Large numbers of excavations were carried out which generated significant new archaeological data which have stimulated research and provided academic opportunities, much of which was funded through grants administered by the Heritage Council. Since 2008, however, there has been an

estimated 66% reduction in the numbers of excavations carried out annually and a consequential reduction of 80% in the numbers of archaeologists employed in the private sector. The general economic climate has also led to a reduction in the funding available to support research projects. Provisional data for 2010 suggests that the numbers of excavations being undertaken may be stabilising, but at a level last experienced in the mid – late 1990s; however, research funding may be cut further in future years. The challenge for the future is to consolidate the benefits accrued during the period of unprecedented economic growth. There are three key areas:

- The development of the existing legislative framework and administrative structures.
- The securing of excavation archives.
- The maintenance of co-operation across sectoral divisions to enhance research and ensure that the data from excavations are transformed into knowledge for the benefit of society as a whole.

4. United Kingdom archaeology in economic crisis

Kenneth Aitchison

Since 1990, archaeology in the United Kingdom has been closely linked to the development process. All developers of land that might potentially damage or destroy archaeological sites are obliged to fund investigation of those remains, with commercial enterprises competing in an open market to provide these services. This led to a rapid growth in the number of people working in archaeology, both in carrying out these field investigations and in advising decision makers on the potential impacts of proposed development. Since the onset of the economic crisis, the levels of construction activity have fallen. This has meant that the amount of archaeological work has also dropped considerably, leading to considerable job losses in the private sector. The new UK government elected in 2010 is committed to reducing the national fiscal deficit by cutting spending, and it can be expected that state agencies and local government, together with universities, will all be heavily affected in the coming years.

5. The end of a golden age? The impending effects of the economic collapse on archaeology in higher education in the United Kingdom

Anthony Sinclair

By contrast with archaeological practice in the professional, commercial sector, the economic crisis has had little direct impact upon archaeology in Higher Education until June 2010, with the exception of a loss of work to some of the institutionally based contracting units. This will change markedly from August 2010. The funding of Higher Education is due to be cut by more than £1 billion, with expectations of a cut of more than 25% in three years. This will reduce the ability of universities to replace staff except in key teaching areas (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and will force university managers to maximise teaching and research income where possible, and to reduce expenditures in other areas, with the possibilities of redundancies in teaching staff. A review of higher education funding in late 2010 will almost certainly increase the tuition fees paid by students, causing them to choose their degrees even more carefully to match employment prospects. Archaeology may be badly affected by these changes. It has expanded enormously in terms of increased student numbers and continued research success. Student applications, however, are on the decline, and research funding is proving very difficult to get. As well, archaeology departments are mostly based in the research-intensive universities, which are likely to be charging the highest tuition fees. Departments will

need to stress the valuable skills that are taught in archaeology degrees, and the professional and educational sectors will need to look at how to support training for field archaeology in new ways that reduce the perceived financial burden on students.

6. Commercial archaeology in Spain: its growth, development, and the impact of the global economic crisis

Eva Parga-Dans

The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the impact of the global economic crisis on the Spanish Archaeological Sector. It is part of a major research theme entitled "The Socioeconomics of Heritage" by the Heritage Laboratory that aims to analyse and systematise information about this sector. At present we have been developing an empirical study on the new market developed in the 1990s in connection with archaeological heritage management in Spain, keeping in mind important differences between the country's 17 regions. We have paid particular attention on the emergence, structure and development of this market sector, examining the relationships between the actors and institutions involved in the generation of knowledge and innovation processes. The specific emphasis in this publication concerns the effects of the current economic crisis on the commercial sector in Spain and on archaeological heritage management more generally. The crisis has led to a significant decline in the construction sector, and also in employment figures. Although we still lack sufficient data, initial quantitative and qualitative assessments confirm that this downturn is also manifest in the commercial archaeological sector, even if with some variations between the regions. Particularly affected are the field 'intervention services' provided by companies to the construction sector, and it may be that a diversification to other actions of outreach and cultural resource management may be the way forwards.

7. A crisis with many faces. The impact of the economic recession on Dutch archaeology

Monique H. van den Dries, Karen E. Waugh & Corien Bakker

A large percentage of the activities carried out within the Dutch archaeological heritage management sector are inherently linked to development and construction activities. In fact, well over 90% of all archaeological activity is developer funded. The fieldwork that this brings along is predominantly carried out by the private sector. Because of this close relationship, one might expect that a recession-induced slump in the building sector will also seriously affect the archaeological (private) sector as well. Nevertheless, in 2009 the effects of the economic crisis on the archaeological sector were not as strong as expected, notably in comparison to some other countries. In fact no archaeological companies went bankrupt (although a few smaller companies stopped trading) and a situation of nearly full employment has been maintained. The national government temporarily stimulated building and development activity by introducing favourable financial measures and bringing forward some large-scale infrastructural works. This may well have helped, but a more important factor might have been that the archaeological sector, just like some others, is showing a delayed reaction, with many companies still having, at the start of 2009, many projects 'in stock'. Still, while we had seen a constant yearly growth of the number of field projects from 2003 onwards, in 2009 for the first time in more than 25 years we witnessed a decline, of over 10%. Field evaluations by means of coring in particular decreased significantly (15%), and also the number of excavations dropped by 7.2%. Was this all due to the economic crisis? The picture for 2009 might in fact be slightly

more complex than a one-to-one relationship with economic activity in the building sector. An important factor, admittedly difficult to quantify, is the still early stage of development our new archaeological heritage management system. Many local governments are only just beginning to implement the principles of the Valletta Convention and to develop local heritage management policies. As a consequence, there is still a lot of work for archaeologists in developing characterisation maps, policy plans, desk-based assessments etc. On the other hand, a better grip by local authorities on their own archaeology and the implementation of new guidelines and regulations on local planning level might put a stop to the previously uncontrolled growth in survey and evaluation works. In general the economic situation in 2010 and the years after might be slightly improving, but expectations are that local and national authorities will then be faced with severe cuts in their budgets. For archaeology, it may be that the bottom of the slump has not yet been reached.

8. One crisis too many? French archaeology between reform and relaunch

Nathan Schlanger & Kai Salas Rossenbach

This paper examines and interprets the impacts of the current economic crisis on French archaeology in the light of previous and ongoing processes within the discipline and beyond. So far as preventive archaeology is concerned, a succession of legal and organisational developments finally led in 2001 to its confirmation as a public service, funded through the polluter-pays principle and oriented towards scientific research and public outreach actions. By 2003, however, the excavation phase of preventive archaeology was opened to commercial competition among licensed operators, in the expectation that the market would reduce costs and delays. This approach proves well in line with the general review of public policies launched in 2007 to rationalise and modernise public services, notably by reducing employment and by restructuring ministries and public sectors. These reforms have already considerably affected universities and research institutions, as well as bodies in charge of archaeological management and supervision. With the background of these upheavals, the global economic crisis reached France in 2008. The ambitious relaunch plan subsequently devised includes major investments in infrastructure and public works (roads, train tracks, etc.), with corresponding requirements in terms of archaeological diagnostics and excavations. However, it was deemed necessary as a counterpart to lighten the administrative procedures for building and development works. The Heritage code was specifically modified so as to 'limit the henceforth excessive influence' of preventive archaeology, by setting limits to the delays on prescriptions and operations. It is probably too early to evaluate the effects of such measures, but there are already grounds to suspect that, apart from the archaeological operators, the developers, the supervising bodies and indeed the archaeological heritage itself may also prove to be at further risk.

9. The crisis and changes in cultural heritage legislation in Hungary: cul-de-sac or solution?

Eszter Bánffy & Pál Raczky

This paper discusses a planned change in Hungarian legislation concerning the definition and protection of archaeological sites. Until now, the legal definition of a site included its inscription in a national database held by the Office of Heritage Protection (KÖH): the new proposal will require these sites are also localised and coordinated in a publicly available, certified database at municipal level. However, such database requirements are currently fulfilled for only a few thousand cases out of the ca. 40.000 sites nationally registered, let alone the c. 200.000 esti-

mated unregistered sites across the country. All these ‘non-sites’ would be left out of the protective legislation; they would not benefit from prior assessments or from the 0.9% of compulsory spending by the development projects on archaeological work. This proposed regulation was apparently designed to help developers and investors to face fewer obstacles before starting building work. But in fact it damages them as well: if a site is found after earthworks are begun, they will be stopped by the KÖH - but since the excavation is then not preventive, there is no assured budget for it, resulting in losses to both developers and archaeology. The authors of the present paper propose a solution that would help with these problems, not only for the current period of economic crisis, but also in the long term, in a way that could serve the interests of both archaeological heritage and economic development.

10. Archaeology in Crisis: The Case of Poland

Arkadiusz Marciniak & Michał Pawleta

The paper aims to discuss the effects of the current global economic situation on Polish archaeology. It begins with a short overview of archaeology and the archaeological heritage sector in contemporary Poland, and its current legal and institutional position. We set then to systematically discuss the nature of the impact of the economic crisis upon major sectors of Polish archaeology in terms of preventive and rescue works, watching brief, academic activities, and the situation of archaeological museums. In particular, we discuss the scope and amount of fieldwork over recent years in relation to changes in the construction industry as well as in the job market in different sectors of archaeology. The most alarming effect of the crisis in Polish archaeology is a dramatic decrease in the quality of preventive and rescue works, due to the application of the most liberal market solutions. This problem is further amplified by structural inefficiencies among the various bodies in charge of setting up standards, of coordinating and of controlling preventive and rescue archaeological works in Poland.

11. The impact of the economic crisis on rescue archaeology in Russia

Asya Engovatova

The system of rescue or preventive archaeology in Russia begun to develop in the late 1920s, and by the 1970s it represented half of the archaeological operations in the country. Nowadays, the body responsible for archaeology within the Academy of Science attributes several kinds of licenses: for research excavations, for surface surveys, for archaeological survey work, and for rescue excavations at endangered sites. The situation of rescue archaeology has fluctuated considerably following the broader changes of the early 1990s and the economic crisis of 1998. However, the number of licenses granted for rescue excavations sharply increased from 2000 onwards, and in the years 2006-2008 some three quarters of all archaeological projects throughout the country were rescue excavations. The current economic crisis has brought about a reduction in the number of archaeological operations, especially those related to private developments. Important state investments in various infrastructures projects will limit the impact of the crisis on archaeological activities. However, effects of crisis can also be seen in attempts in the Duma to reduce archaeological legal protection measures, and also in new tax exemption measures which favour private companies at the expense of public bodies like museums and universities.

12. The Effect of the Global Recession on Cultural Resources Management in the United States

Jeffrey H. Altschul

The effects of the global recession on cultural resource management (CRM) in the United States have been deeper and more widespread than most in the industry anticipated. The reasons for failing to appreciate the financial repercussions of the recession are varied, ranging from simply misjudging the economy to more complicated factors involving the ways government agencies allocate funds. How these factors played out over 2009 and 2010 and what we can expect in the near term are the subjects of this paper.

13. Postscript: on dead canaries, guinea-pigs and other Trojan horses

Nathan Schlanger

If the current economic crisis can be compared to some medieval plague, what are the patterns of its progression? Does it strike archaeological practice and heritage management indiscriminately, or are there weak spots or protected zones to be discerned? The situation is contrasted regarding employment, with some countries suffering important job losses, leading to the image of archaeology as a ‘canary’ trade in times of crisis. These losses will deeply affect the profession, since highly specialised experts are difficult to replace, as are experienced field technicians and post-excavations personnel. In these constrained conditions, the balance between the scientific and the economic dimensions of contemporary archaeology appears increasingly biased against research objectives, scientific quality, publications and public outreach. Lastly, according to the policies and ideologies in place, state interventions can be expected. Alongside stimulus packages and investments in infrastructure programmes, also in evidence are various adjustments and tinkering with legislations, institutions and procedures. Whatever their intentions or pertinence, these measures should not be allowed to endanger the archaeological and patrimonial principles of the Malta Convention – be it for the duration of the crisis, and for the recovery that will follow.