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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

**MULTIPLE IMPACTS,
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Edited by Nathan Schlanger
and Kenneth Aitchison

10. Archaeology in crisis: the case of Poland

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1 Introduction

The paper discusses the effects of the current global economic situation on Polish archaeology. In particular, it reviews the scope of rescue and preventive works over recent years and its relationship with the development of the construction industry, as well as the job market situation in different sectors of archaeology. It will further scrutinize the impact of the economic crisis and its consequences upon the pre-existing structural inefficiency of legal and practical solutions in various areas of Polish archaeology.

The analysis presented here is based upon publicly available data on the budgets of major infrastructure initiatives as well as government expenditure for culture, heritage protection, and higher education. This analysis is significantly enriched by the results of a systematic survey of a representative group of twenty active professional archaeologists conducted at the beginning of 2010 (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010). Unfortunately, not all archaeological institutions make their financial data publicly available, which has precluded a more systematic evaluation of the impact of the crisis upon their activities. Nevertheless, this analysis made it possible to identify and scrutinize some general trends. Accordingly, this chapter systematically discusses their character in the major sectors of Polish archaeology, in terms of preventive and rescue works, watching briefs, academic activities, and the situation of archaeological museums. These are discussed within the context of a constantly changing heritage protection doctrine with regards to the context of practice and its legal frameworks. An initial, brief overview of Polish archaeology and its archaeological heritage sector sets the scene.

2 Archaeology and archaeological heritage in contemporary Poland

Democratic Poland inherited from its communist predecessor a well-developed state-funded system, with the discipline divided into four archaeological sectors with clearly defined roles and duties. These were (1) the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences defined as the most significant archaeological institution responsible for pursuing research and setting academic standards, (2) university departments responsible for education, (3) museums in charge of protecting archaeological collections and popularising archaeology, and (4) Centres for Monument Protection responsible for the protection of archaeological monuments and movable objects and undertaking rescue excavations.

Due to dynamic developments over the last two decades, which mainly involved the emergence of large scale development-led archaeological projects, this system is no longer in place. Centres for Monument Protection have been dissolved, and their staff were among the first to join the private archaeological sector in the country. The Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Polish Academy of Sciences was transformed into the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, and its significance declined due to increasingly insufficient funding.

The last fifteen years have seen the implementation of huge infrastructure projects that demanded large scale preventive excavations in association with pan-European and national investments, in particular pipelines from Russia to Western Europe, and then a network of highways and expressways. Consequently, Polish archaeology has been confronted with a huge number of excavations to be conducted at a fast pace on a scale never experienced before. This has significantly shaped its character and created many unforeseen consequences. One of them has been the commercialisation of the archaeological profession. The emergence of private archaeological firms has led to the rapid emergence of a quite new professional group on the market, characterized by a high efficiency in conducting long excavation campaigns on a large scale. Taking into account the previously dominant Polish model of small, almost 'family' excavations, this can undoubtedly be regarded as an almost 'revolutionary' development.

The preventive excavations related to the construction of the gas pipeline from Siberia to Western Europe in the early 1990s were the first major undertaking in the post-1989 period. The Polish highway program, initiated in June 1995, aimed at laying out 2300 km of highways together with numerous expressways. Archaeological preventive excavations ahead of these developments are in a strip of 80 to 100 m wide and have been carried out without interruption since 1997. Solutions and regulations implemented in the framework of the pipeline archaeological projects created a precedent for the formulation of a new doctrine for the conservation and protection of archaeological heritage in the country. After some modifications, they were later implemented during the highway project.

A legislative framework for the large scale preventive projects was provided by the *Spatial Management and Building and Construction Act* as well as the *Law for Highway Constructions in Poland*, both passed in 1994. The development funder was obliged to cover the costs of preventive excavations, documentation, and analyses of the results. The Valletta Convention for the protection of the archaeological heritage was ratified by Poland in 1996, and considerably broadened and strengthened the goals of archaeology to include, alongside research and valorisation, the integrated management, protection and promotion of the common archaeological heritage.

These regulations were later combined into a new legislative initiative known as the *Protection of Monuments and the Guardianship of Monuments Act* which was passed in 2003. The Act makes it clear that all archaeological sites regardless their quality or significance are protected by law. The provisions of the Act stipulate that, so far as field methods and standards of documentation are concerned, all rescue work should be conducted in the same manner as any other research projects, and funders are obliged to cover all the costs. Furthermore, it is required that the excavated materials be professionally analysed and preferably published. When it proves necessary, the objects have to be properly conserved. Here again the funder is officially obliged to cover the costs of all these works (see also Gąssowski 2007, 164).

These legislative regulations were also accompanied by institutional transformations. In 1995, the Minister for Culture and Arts created the Archaeological Rescue Research Centre, which was set to control the merit of preventive archaeological works within the highways construction project. In particular, this Rescue Centre was obliged to co-operate with the General Directorate of National Roads and Motorways in the management of the entire project, in setting up standards of excavations, in the selection of contractors, and in controlling the quality of

works. At the same time, the role of the provincial curators of the archaeological heritage diminished, leaving them in charge of formal administrative procedures. In 2002, this Rescue Centre was replaced by the Archaeological Heritage Protection Centre. Its original duties were extended to a range of issues of conservation and management including the control over all archaeological regional conservators. The Centre was also charged of controlling good practice and quality of preventive excavations along with the publication of their results.

Both Centres have played a vital role in Polish archaeology over the last decade. Being well acquainted with the most pertinent issues of protection and management of archaeological heritage, they became partners for development funders and potential contractors of large scale works. At the same time, both Centres were custodians of principles of best practice and established a scientific system of protection and conservation of archaeological heritage. Preventive excavations were recognized as a scientific endeavour *per se*. Contractors are selected on the basis of their previous experience in conducting similar works, scientific qualification, professional personnel, adequate storage facilities, etc. Consequently, large scale preventive excavations were mainly undertaken by national scientific institutions such as universities, museums or the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Science. This system also made possible the participation of smaller commercial and private archaeological firms, employed as subcontractors and supervised by the main contractor. More importantly, it ensured a high quality of archaeological works, enabled effective control over them, and effectively prevented reductions in quality standards (Gaśowski 2007, 166). However, it also turned out to be relatively expensive, leading to a divergence of interests and became potentially corruptible.

In recent years, yet another organisational change has taken place. The Archaeological Heritage Protection Centre lost its independence in 2007 and was incorporated into the National Heritage Board of Poland. In this new structural framework, archaeological heritage issues are not any longer dealt with by an autonomous body with its own budget. Its role was clearly diminished by being enmeshed with administration and management of other types of heritage in the country.

The National Heritage Board of Poland then decided to withdraw from the coordination and control of large-scale preventive works. This left a vacuum with no independent quality control by any external professional body over the works carried out. Controlling and reviewing responsibilities of these works are now conducted exclusively by developer-appointed committees made up of administrative staff employed by the developer, including archaeologists. This obviously rules out objectivity and neutrality of opinions as well as critical reviews of the quality of the work done. The most important change involved a different system of selecting the contractor for archaeological works. With the advent of free market regulations the contractor is now being chosen on a commercial basis through a system of tendering in which the decisive factor is exclusively the proposed price. This has triggered competition in the market for archaeological services between private firms and consortia and state institutions that resulted in a drastic decrease in both the scope of archaeological works and their quality. As a result, proposals made by private firms are commonly chosen due to their lower costs and possibility to complete allocated tasks in increasingly shorter time slots. Academic institutions are being slowly removed from this market due to the more expensive costs required to complete excavations in academically acceptable standards as well as a number of administrative obstacles for state institutions that considerably slow down any project.

3 Polish archaeology in global economic crisis

3.1 Poland and the global crisis. An overview

The economic situation in Poland in recent years has been considerably different than that in many other countries, where the effects of the global economic crisis have been much serious. Although symptoms of an economic slowdown have recently been recorded, local economists claim that as yet there are no signs of recession. In 2008 a 5% GDP was recorded, and 1.7% in 2009. In the current year, 2010, it is expected to amount to 3%. However, during the same period a rate of unemployment increased from 9.5% at the end of 2008 to 12.8% in January 2010 (<http://www.gus.pl>).

In general, archaeological activities are believed to be directly dependent on the economic situation of the country. As the number of developments declines, the scope and scale of practicing archaeology in the country, including the rescue and contract archaeology sectors, will be inevitably affected. This is in accord with a more general trend in different countries across Europe, where the crisis has mainly affected commercial and development-led archaeological works (Aitchison 2009, 661). In Poland, however, the economic slowdown does not appear to have a direct impact upon a condition of Polish archaeology. The situation is not straightforward insofar as different archaeological sectors, including commercial, academic, museum or heritage protection, work within a diversified legal, organisational and financial system. In fact, it is the inefficiency and incompatibility of this system, rather than any kind of global economic turbulences that is responsible for the undisputable crisis in contemporary Polish archaeology.

Nowadays most archaeological work in Poland is conducted in relation to the construction of motorways and expressways as well as other building developments that are considered as a priority ahead of the European Football Championship, which will be jointly hosted by Poland and Ukraine in 2012. Paradoxically, the climax of the preparation of the Championship coincided with the peak of the global crisis. As the Championship is portrayed as an event of almost 'civilisational' significance, its successful preparation is inevitably highly politicised. Hence, a number of infrastructure projects have been planned and are being implemented, in particular road and train networks, airports, railways stations and stadiums. The state expenditure for road construction has increased considerably, and this automatically enlarged the budgets for preventive archaeological projects. Whereas in 2007 a sum of PLN 7 billion was spent on the construction of roads and highways in Poland, this amounted to PLN 9 billion in 2008 and PLN 18 billion in 2009. For the year 2010, the allocated expenditure will amount to PLN 27 billion. During the past two years the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways has signed contracts for the construction of 1225 km of roads, including 601 km of highways and 624 km of expressways as well as numerous inter-urban, ring roads and for rebuilding of major communication arteries (<http://www.gddkia.gov.pl>; see also Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010).

3.2 Preventive & rescue archaeological work

The scale and scope of preventive and rescue archeology is largely dependent upon the overall economic situation in the country, in particular the housing con-

struction sector, the real estate market and the state-funded infrastructure. Hence, problems with credit availability and a decrease in a number of infrastructure projects may have a direct impact upon the demand for archaeological work. This in turn results in increasing competition in the market for archaeological services and eventually in reduced income for archaeological firms.

As mentioned above, the current situation in Polish preventive and rescue archaeology is considerably different than that in most other European countries. Despite an overall economic crisis, large-scale infrastructure investments have not been cut down thanks to the intensive preparations for the European Championship. On the contrary, these need to be completed at a much faster pace than in ordinary conditions. This time pressure has had direct consequences upon preventive excavations as the allocated time for completion has also been radically shortened when compared with the situation only a couple of years ago. Furthermore, the general conditions for undertaking preventive archaeology were additionally shaped by new legal solutions. In September 2008, in order to speed up the construction of highways in Poland, the General Directorate for National Roads and Motorways passed a law requiring that decisions on the placement of any highway or expressway have to be linked to the permission for their construction. In practice, this means that all the stages of archaeological works (e.g. survey, evaluation, legal and administrative procedures, as well as excavations) inevitably have to coincide with the construction works.

Examples of extremely short delays to the overall construction projects in order to allow preventive archaeological work are numerous. In one of the 2009 tenders for archaeological work for an area of 25 hectares, in relation to the construction of the S5 expressway near Gniezno in the Wielkopolska province, the Poznań branch of the General Directorate required excavations of the entire area be completed in a period of three months only. Likewise, the Kraków branch of the same Directorate wanted to have an area of 46 hectares excavated prior to the construction of a local road in the Małopolska region, linking the Radzikowski Junction with the Modlinica Junction, excavated within seven months. Needless to say, it is virtually impossible to conduct viable and up-to-standard excavations of this scale in such a short period of time.

To comply with increasingly tight time requirements and smaller tenders offered by the contractor, archaeological firms have reduced the amount of scientific analysis they undertake and lowered the standards of scientific documentation in order to accelerate the archaeological works and maintain the same level of income. The reduction of the basic rate set for excavating a given area of archaeological deposits may cause a situation in which the systematic study of stratigraphically complex sites simply proves to be unprofitable. There are examples of archaeological firms suffering significant high financial losses because they attempted to excavate complex sites to appropriate quality standards. Another unacceptable practice involves the deliberate falsifying of archaeological documentation, reporting a false number of features in order to increase income (according to the financial regulations). Unfortunately, neither the National Heritage Board of Poland nor provincial heritage offices have the necessary tools or resources to stop this unethical and illegal practice. The current situation has also led to a growing amount of unpublished archaeological data obtained during commercial excavations (see also Kobyliński 2008, 229-230).

Thus, what is alarming and what we consider to be the main effect of the economic crisis upon preventive archaeology in Poland has been a deterioration in the quality of archaeological work. Nearly all archaeological companies (mainly

private but also some universities) have been able to maintain the same level of income as in the past, yet they are unable to comply to required standards of research and quality of fieldwork. This does not relate merely to excavation procedures, but also to post-excavation analysis and the publication of final results.

This overall deteriorating situation of preventive archaeology in Poland over the last couple of years was further worsened by the mass return of Polish contract archaeologists who had been working in Western Europe. In the years 2004 – 2008, a large number of archaeologists emigrated to Ireland and the United Kingdom, particularly to work on the numerous motorway excavations following the implementation of the road program and coordinated by the National Road Agency in Ireland (Aitchison 2009, 662). They accounted for approximately 50–70 per cent of any archaeological teams assembled by private Irish firms (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010). This emigration in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century led to staff shortages at Polish archaeological firms which led to an increase of between 40% and 70% in the wages of technicians and field directors alike. A majority of the archaeologists that had emigrated returned to Poland in the first half of 2008, in the period when the economic crisis has been felt most severely. This coincided with the above discussed legal and organisational changes in Polish archaeology, and both factors led to in a considerable decrease in salaries, in places up to 50%, and in forcing staff to accept unpaid overtime (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010).

The employment system in most of private or semi-private archaeological firms is determined by the policy of outsourcing. This means most companies prefer to offer temporary employment for undertaking a precisely allocated task in a well defined period of time. This policy is set to considerably reduce employment costs, as the firm does not have to cover work insurance and other eligible expenses. Thus, as far as the structure of employment in private archaeological firms is concerned, it is directly related to the demand for archaeological services, itself dependent upon success in tendering of archaeological works. For example, a big private archaeological company *AKME* from Wrocław recently reduced the number of archaeologists it employed due to a shortage of field contracts. Yet, in 2009 it had to hire several archaeologists to undertake preventive excavations prior to construction of the S8 expressway. During the same time the *PKZ-Poznań* firm – a consortium partner of *AKME* in this very project – had to employ three full time archaeologists along with several temporary specialists to be able to complete its share of the project in the allocated time. A similar situation occurred in the Archaeological and Historical Museum in Głogów, which had to temporarily employ archaeologists to works in preventive excavations prior to the construction of another section of S8 expressway (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010).

3.3 Watching briefs

The demand for archaeological services is also directly related to the number of small scale private and public infrastructure projects being undertaken. The largest market for this kind of works exists in metropolitan centres such as Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, and Poznań. The year 2009 marked the largest economic slowdown in the country, but it did not immediately led to a dramatic collapse in housing construction. In the period between January and December 2009 more than 160,000 flats were built, which was 3.1% less than in the preceding year but 19.7% more than in 2007 (<http://www.gus.com>). However, yet, some projects and

construction works have been delayed or suspended as happened with the construction of a huge multiplex in Gorzów Wielkopolski (Lubusz Land province). Due to the developer's bankruptcy, this construction was postponed in 2008 along with the accompanying rescue archaeological work at the site which were to be undertaken by Gorzów Museum archaeologists.

There are more than a thousand private archaeological firms in Poland and their numbers are constantly growing. In the majority of cases, these are single-individual entities, run by people with permanent jobs elsewhere. Watching briefs and small scale excavations serve to supplement their incomes. For this group, a drop in the number of available contracts does not lead to their bankruptcy or result in closing down the business. However, for a few dozen firms archaeological work is the main if not the only source of income. They usually employ between two and three individuals, which are supported by additional temporary employees during seasonal archaeological works. Only a few well-established firms offer permanent jobs to archaeologists.

Archaeological watching briefs are set to monitor the excavation of foundation trenches and other intrusive works and are aimed at identifying and recording archaeological finds and features. These watching briefs are much less restrictive than preventive excavations prior to highway and expressway constructions. Hence, the watching brief market is more dynamic and flexible; selection of the contractor depends mainly upon the planned length of the works as well as price and the overall reputation of the firm. Rates for the same kind of work offered in different parts of the country may vary by as much as 80%. Provincial heritage offices are in charge of controlling the quality of this work: the frequency of inspections is not fixed, and depends on the policies of particular provincial offices and their available personnel. For example, archaeologists carrying out watching briefs in the Mazowsze province are very often monitored during their work. Quite the opposite situation exists in the Wielkopolska province. The results of field survey conducted in 2009 by archaeologists from the Institute of Prehistory at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań revealed that watching briefs in this province were not commonly undertaken in areas required systematic conservation protection. In some instances detached houses were built on archaeological sites or archaeological sites were destroyed by gravel-pits without a watching brief taking place (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010).

3.4 Academic / university archaeology

The economic recession over the last few years has turned out to have had little impact upon the funding levels of higher education in Poland. In this respect, the overall situation of academic archaeology has not changed. There were neither job losses nor wage reductions. A similar level of state support has also been maintained regarding scholarships for students. In fact, the state expenditure on higher education in 2009 increased by about 12% in comparison to the previous year (<http://www.gus.pl>).

Generally, state funding for academic archaeology in Poland has always been conspicuously low. This has meant that further reductions of these small sums has had limited effect as academic archaeology was constantly seeking support from other sources. For example, the 2009 budget of the Institute of Prehistory at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań was identical to that of the preceding year. Considering inflation, this meant that the 2009 budget, both for education and

research, was in fact slightly smaller than in 2008. The preliminary and unofficial estimate for the year 2010 reports a slight increase, taking inflation into consideration. However, these funds will still be largely insufficient to cover all didactic and research expenses in relation to the range of activities pursued by its staff. It is worth mentioning that the departmental budget depends upon scientific achievements of a given institution. Consequently, archaeological institutes ranked low receive a smaller subsidy than those of higher academic standard.

However, signs of the financial crisis are visible in the reduction of the travel funds available to university staff for attending international conferences and meetings. Additionally, in case of some archaeological conferences organized in Poland over the last two years, speakers have had to cover participation costs themselves or seek financial support from their home institutions rather than, as used to be the case in the past, being supported by the organisers. This occurred at the conference *XVI Śląskie Spotkania Archeologiczne* (16th Silesian Archaeological Meeting) organised in 2009 by the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Wrocław.

Some kind of remedy for this crisis, at least at university level, has been through the increasing participation of Polish archaeologists in EU sponsored programs and grants. This new situation will hopefully contribute to the budgets of Polish archaeological institutions in the coming years. However, a major share of additional funds for academic archaeology comes from rescue and preventive projects, as discussed above. The poor funding of Polish science in general and the new pressure from the private sector have paved the way for academic institutions to engage in competition for rescue archaeology contracts. For some of the institutions, such as the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, these contracts have become sources of substantial financial support for other research projects. Consequently, the early stage of the highway preventive archaeology was characterised by the emergence of numerous consortia in which academic institutes placed a vital role. Small, privately owned archaeological firms were only allowed to participate in these projects as sub-contractors. Moreover, the significant role played by academic institutes in preventive archaeology has far reaching consequences as it secures both high scientific standards in fieldwork and academic interest in broadening the knowledge of the past of the studied region (see more in Marciniak 2006).

From a short-sighted, strictly economic point of view, the involvement of academic archaeologists in contract archaeology may be seen as favourable for the development of archaeological activities. In fact, this may prove to be quite dangerous for the future of the discipline, insofar as it will separate academic archaeologists from teaching and research, and also channels the ways in which archaeological evidence is created and transmitted to future generations.

3.5 Archaeological museums

According to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage statistics, subsidies for museums increased in 2009 by more than 10%, when compared with the previous year. Similarly, the budget of provincial centres for conservation and documentation of historical monuments has increased by more than 11%, although financial resources for the protection of monuments reduced by 18%. Overall, the total expenditure on culture and national heritage protection in 2009 was 11.8% higher than in the previous year. Statistics provided by the Ministry also show a steady increase in a number of museum visitors, in particular to regional and historical ones (<http://www.gus.pl>; <http://www.mkidn.gov.pl>).

Nevertheless, as revealed by a recent inspection by the Supreme Chamber of Control, museums in Poland are not in a good shape. The most commonly encountered problems concern poor security and storage of museum collections, failures in conservation and protection of collections and incompatibilities in safety legislation. The current state of Polish museums, in particular the unsatisfactory protection of their collections, is the result of years of neglect and organisational inefficiency. Archaeological museums are no longer government-financed bodies but work within the structures of regional government, towns and cities and their poor state has nothing to do with the current global economic crisis.

Besides their statutory activities, most archaeological museums also participate in commercial archaeological projects that can partly improve their financial situation. Since they usually have professional staff, financial resources and in particular are in possession of storage facilities, they are able to create consortia with private or semi-private archaeological companies and other archaeological institutions. This solution was for many years implemented by the Archaeological Museum in Kraków, participating in the consortium *Krakowski Zespół do Bada Autostrad* with the Institute of Archaeology at the Jagiellonian University and the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Science in Kraków. The income generated from those activities was invested in a new publication series, in upgrading scientific equipment and in a significant renovation of the museum buildings. This successful co-operation generated a considerable increase of the museum budget, and yet, paradoxically perhaps, it also resulted a cut to the basic state subsidy of PLN 650,000. Thus, at present, when income is not longer being generated from preventive excavations, the Museum cannot rely on the official subsidies to cover its deficit, and is consequently in poor economic shape (cf. <http://www.ma.krakow.pl/muzeum/sf>). A similar initiative has also been taken by the Archaeological and Historical Museum in Głogów (<http://www.glogow.pl/mah/>). Besides undertaking archaeological watching briefs, this museum also participated in preventive excavations prior to the construction of the S3 and S8 expressways in a consortium with two private companies – AKME and PKZ-Poznań. The income generated was invested by the museum in the construction of a storehouse (Gańska-Kiarszys, Kiarszys 2010).

4 Final remarks

Monitoring the impact of the global economic crisis on the condition of Polish archaeology is made difficult by the lack of systematic quantitative data, as well as the complicated structural and organisational landscape of institutions responsible for heritage protection. It is clear, however, that the impact of the global economic crisis on archaeology in Poland has not been as significant as in other European countries and worldwide. Its effects upon the commercial sector have been considerably mitigated by the large number of ongoing highway and expressway projects for the forthcoming Euro 2012, as well as the relatively good state of the housing construction sector and the real estate market. Moreover, EU grants and subsidies have increasingly become an alternative source of financing for archaeological projects and research.

Clear symptoms of the crisis can be seen only in preventive and rescue archaeology, as variously undertaken across Poland by a range of private archaeological firms and commercial units. The ways that the sector is structured, the lack of

quality control, the dominance of private companies, the poor ethical standards in evidence, the time constraints imposed by the developers, and the increasingly low budgets available for archaeological work make it impossible to maintain high academic standards on large-scale excavations with preventive archaeological methodologies. This refers in particular to the excavation of certain categories of sites, such as inhumation cemeteries and complex settlement structures.

In comparison with the situation at the end of the 1990s and the early years of this decade, today's budgetary constraints on rescue archaeology impose the need for a fast excavation process which clearly favours small private companies and may lead to their absolute domination over the rescue archaeology sector in the near future. Academic archaeology would have no choice but to accept that a major part of field archaeological activities will soon find itself beyond their reach. And it is exactly this sector of activities that produces a vast body of archaeological material, which needs to be systematically studied, published and properly stored in the years to come.

In these times of global economic crisis, Polish archaeology sees considerable financial benefits from preventive excavations and from the increasing support of EU institutions, and yet it remains mired in a permanent structural crisis. This is caused by a number of intertwined factors such as (1) the malfunctioning system of archaeological heritage management and protection; (2) the lack of a professional institution in charge of setting up, controlling and enforcing standards of preventive archaeological research in the country; (3) the inefficient public procurement law and free-market regulations, which lead to the lowering of the standards and quality of archaeological works; and (4) the imprecise laws relating to the protection of cultural heritage. Perhaps the most alarming effects of the crisis in Polish archaeology relates to the dramatic decrease in the quality of preventive and rescue works due to adoption of the most liberal solutions in which only profits come to the fore. This is further worsened by a structural inefficiency of various bodies in charge of setting standards and coordinating control over preventive and rescue archaeological work.

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