

Archaeology and the crisis

Monitoring the impacts of the global economic crisis on archaeology

For the past several months, major changes in the global economic situation have affected and will continue to affect our lives. Both at face value and as a collective syndrome, the 'crisis' clearly impacts on the practice of archaeology, on its practitioners, and ultimately on the knowledge we produce about the past.

Although several initiatives have begun to try and document this situation (notably in the UK), we still lack means to assemble, compare and analyse the relevant information on a comprehensive thematic and geographical scale. With this objective in mind, a dedicated webpage has been created on the website of the EC-funded network ACE – *Archaeology in Contemporary Europe. Professional practices and public outreach*.

This webpage - www.ace-archaeology.eu/archaeology-and-the-crisis.shtml - will bring together, make available and monitor some of the effects of the crisis on archaeology. Information is organised on country by country basis, and, besides texts, analysis, links to other websites, newspapers, official sites etc., is focuses on the four overlapping themes:

1 - Impact of the crisis on **research funding and priorities:**

Questions include: have the budgets dedicated to research (infrastructure or project based, in universities or research bodies) been affected by the crisis, in terms of available funding, evaluation criteria, types of projects selected, eligible expenditures, etc.

2 - Impact of the crisis on **professional employment:**

Issues here concern (a) employment, job security, recruitment and redundancies (notably in contract archaeology), (b) the health and prospects of various archaeological employers, in public or private sectors, and (c) the crucial issue of professional training and skills, by universities, by employers, and particularly the possibilities of their maintenance - or loss – due to the crisis.

3 - Impact of the crisis on **conservation and public outreach:**

What are the impacts of the crisis on archaeological documentation and finds, as studied, curated and stored by field units or by museums? What is the fate of various activities (personnel, publications, exhibitions etc) aimed at communication and public outreach? What impact on the broader public's interest in the past and its values?

4 - 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 on the contrary delayed by – various responses to the 'crisis' at regional or central government levels. These include changes in the legal definition of 'archaeological sites', changes in the intensity, monitoring, timing or funding of protection measures, merging of heritage management institutions or functions, effects of economic 'new deals' and re-launch initiatives, etc.

In seeking, submitting and evaluating this information, it will be recalled that each country, with their initial starting conditions, will be responding through different measures, with different anticipated and unforeseen effects. The 'crisis' can neither account for nor excuse everything that is going on: other processes and patterns need to be taken on board. Periodic comments, updates and reviews will serve us to highlight possible trends and to better grasp the immediate and long term effects of the crisis - thus possibly contributing to archaeology's bouncing back.

It is expected that a first synthesis of the information on the 'archaeology-and-the-crisis' webpage will be available during the session 'Archaeology and the crisis', at the EAA 2009 meeting in Riva del Garda.