

Inventoring Underwater and Coastal Cultural Heritage, an ancient challenge for the future

Organizer

Name: Anaïs Diméglio
Affiliation: Drassm - French Ministry of Culture
E-mail: anais.dimeglio@culture.gouv.fr

Co-organizers

Name: Sybil Thiebaud
Affiliation: DRASSM - French Ministry of Culture

Name: Alison Faynot
Affiliation: UNESCO

Session Description

Underwater and coastal heritage, which bears witness to a shared maritime culture, is usually kept hidden beneath the water and sand. This heritage is revealed, and sometimes destroyed, by intense environmental phenomena or the impact of human activities. Organizing campaigns dedicated to the detection of these artifacts, whether they are or not in immediate danger, enables one to draw up an inventory of the sites, as well as to determine their degree of vulnerability.

Detecting underwater and coastal cultural heritage, characterizing it, preserving it through study and, subsequently, promoting it to the public, is one of the key challenges of the coming decades. Continuing to build up this inventory goes hand in hand with the constant need to manage liabilities in the light of research developments, or the necessity to return to known sites to assess their current state and prioritize actions.

This inventory is a challenge for researchers, academics, organizations, associations, and state institutions around the world. To meet this challenge, archaeologists have implemented strategies, sought to adapt, and innovate in the face of the constraints and threats associated with underwater and coastal environments and sites. The management and proper use of inventories can also lead to contradictions. For example, the confidential status of underwater and coastal sites, particularly shipwrecks, is a key issue, as is the need to share information with other stakeholders to better integrate this heritage into maritime spatial planning and related marine sciences.