

COASTAL DEVELOPMENTS AND WATERFRONT CONSTRUCTIONS: CITY, DYKE, DAM AND MARINA BUILDING

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Angra bay - the Azorean harbour that served Angra city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned since the Age of Discoveries – is no larger than 10 soccer fields. In spite of having such a humble area, between 1522 and 1998 at least 96 shipwrecks have occurred there - the majority of them Portuguese and Spanish ships coming back from the India or the New World.

Plundered by treasure hunters in 1972, threatened by commercial salvage activities between 1993 and 1996, mutilated by the construction of a marina in 1998, Angra bay was turned into a classified underwater archaeological preserve in 2005. In spite of that, the bay is now designated to be the location of a Transatlantic Cruising Ship Pier. This move will impact the scores of historical wrecks still to be discovered under its sandy bottom way beyond any mitigation measures that might be taken.

The case of Angra bay, as well as several others that will be quoted, is a fine example of how the fundamental protection of underwater cultural heritage is not carved in stone and how nautical archaeologists must have their voices heard in the discussion on “what development?”, “where?” and “at what cost?”.