

# Maritime archaeology and marine conservation: the need for synergy in an uncertain future

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## Abstract

Marine conservationists are concerned with preserving and understanding living resources found within our seas whereas marine archaeologists are concerned with preserving and understanding the non-living. Despite having different motivations, marine conservation and marine archaeology are fighting against the same anthropological threats, including climate change, fishing activities, and offshore development. In recent years, the safeguarding of marine and cultural resources has been increasingly recognized through international commitments such as the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and more recently, the 2030 Development Agenda via the creation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals and targets cover both pressing social and biological issues, but meeting these commitments has since been a challenge. In regards to biological conservation, both Aichi Target 11 and SDG 14.5 call for the conservation of 10% of the marine and coastal environment by 2020. Countries also agreed to SDG 11.4, which aims to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. While number-based goals, such as Aichi 11 and SDG 14.5, have been more popular given they are easier to track, qualitative goals, such as SDG 11.4, have been harder to measure. We highlight a need to promote synergy between the goals given the connection between marine archaeology and marine conservation and detail how international commitments regarding marine and cultural resources such as Aichi Target 11, SDG 14.5, and SDG 11.4 can be met and streamlined through 'other effective area-based conservation measures' or OECMs. OECMs are a recent innovation in the marine conservation policy realm. They describe a defined area whose primary purpose is not biological conservation, but by consequence biodiversity is benefiting. While OECM designation would allow an area to be internationally recognized as protected and counted towards the global biological conservation goals, more importantly, the OECM designation has the potential to increase the recognition of more stakeholders that contribute toward in-situ biological conservation and increase ecological representation and connectivity that is lacking among existing marine protected areas (MPAs). Using Underwater Archaeological Parks (UAPs) of Portugal as an example, we show that underwater cultural sites have the potential to be designated as OECMs and Parties should consider them as OECMs become mainstreamed in marine conservation practices.