HIFMB NEWS #01/21

Top Story: A Marine Political Ecology Perspective + Cooperation: The Value of Information and its Consequences for Optimal Decision-Making + 3rd Symposium on Functional Marine Biodiversity + Cooperation: Creating Synergies between International Research Projects + Editorial: View from Northwest #7 + Open Call: HIFMB Integrative Postdoc Pool + HIFMB Team Fun Fact

We need a framework that extends beyond disciplinary divides.

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TOP STORY

A Marine Political Ecology Perspective

Only within the last couple decades have social science and humanities scholars intentionally taken their disciplines offshore and into the depths of the sea. Academic and policy circles now recognize the justification for interdisciplinary ocean research.

Such efforts have brought attention to the ocean's importance to every aspect of our lives. This turn has not discovered our relations with the oceans anew, but has given voice to, and legitimized connections that ocean-minded peoples have long known, but which have been largely ignored by policy makers and institutions. Moving forward, researchers are calling for projects that engage in "critical ocean studies" that are more inclusive in their perspectives and can offer better frameworks and practices for living under the Anthropocene. This is the project of marine political ecology. It is a perspective of joining critical politics with environmental study to transcend typical boundaries in light of our changing planet.

Indeed, within this "oceanic turn", the ocean itself exceeds individual disciplines or narrow categorizations. Yet, as scholars we often engage it piecemeal, discussing the ocean as the element of water or its waves, other times as fish, petroleum, mineral, or sand resources, and increasingly as data, archive, or media. Outside of academic discussions, ocean management practices commonly disassemble ocean spaces and ecosystems into disparate parts by sector or jurisdiction. The preamble to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the proclaimed constitution of the oceans, declares "the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole". →

» The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) divides the world's oceans up into fragments based on boundaries, species, uses, users, depths, and mobilities. It finishes without ever putting the pieces back together again. «

→ Yet, this statement is followed by two hundred pages dedicated to dividing up the world's oceans into fragments based on boundaries, species, uses, users, depths, and mobilities. It finishes without ever putting the pieces back together again, towards recognizing its connections and relations.

For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, Parliament passed the 2004 Foreshore and Seabed Act, employing UNCLOS jurisdictions to nationalize the seabed, ignoring traditional ocean tenure of Indigenous Māori Tribes. The ongoing struggle involves questions not only over the 'ocean grab' by a settler nation-state, but more fundamentally whether it is productive to divide ecosystems and management practices between land and sea, as they typically are in Western frameworks. Māori have long held a viewpoint which situates human and nature within a framework of kinship, extending from mountains to sea. As two seabed mining companies seek to extract minerals off their coasts, these differing worldviews have real impacts both on- and offshore.

So, a broad change in thinking about ocean care is arguably necessary: one that is not based in command and control of nature, but existing with, in, and for our living environment. We need to not only develop a framework that extends beyond disciplinary divides, but one that expands worldviews regarding our fundamental relationship to nature. Proposed shifts in thinking have included closing the human-nature divide via embracing the physical world through concepts of entanglements, living relations, kin, and natureculture. Other have suggested we must learn from and think with the ocean as part of our society and part of us. The Māori axiom, "I am the ocean and the ocean is me," was used in testimonies against the Trans Tasman Ltd. seabed mining project, drawing attention to the inseparability of those living within this coastal environment. In fact, several Tribes have recently been successful in securing rights of personhood for a river, a mountain, and a fern forest. The complex outcomes from these designations are still unfolding, but will have important lessons for new ways of thinking about our relations with nature.

Recent policy-focused literature provides evidence of a shift towards more holistic socio-ecological framing allowing for integration of information across disciplines, jurisdictions, and scales. And while it may be impossible to think and practice ocean care without some categorizing and simplifying of its complex whole, we may choose more just and equitable divisions with which to engage. Most importantly, we must always recognize that these divisions while they may be entrenched, are not constants of nature, and must be adapted or discarded as necessary. This is what a marine political ecology perspective can offer.

Dr. Katherine G. Sammler is geographer and head of the HIFMB focus group "Marine Political Ecology"

photo © Katherine Sammler

Whenuakura Marae Cares: Seabed mining sign protesting seabed mining at Whenua Kura community center, New Zealand.

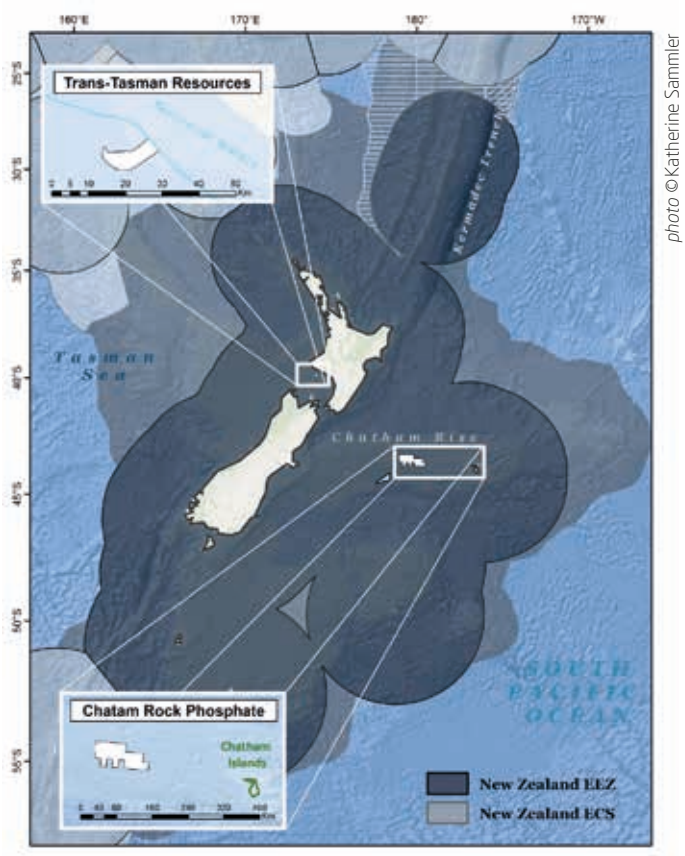

photo © Katherine Sammler

Divided waters: Two seabed mining permit areas amidst New Zealand's jurisdictional boundaries.

COOPERATION

The Value of Information and its Consequences for Optimal Decision-Making

In the new joint research project between the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics of Bielefeld University and the HIFMB, both parties combine their expertises in ecology and economy to explore the possible value of (additional) information and its consequences for optimal decision making in the context of ecological-economic problems. The "Value of Information"-Project is led by PD Dr. Thorsten Upmann and its core idea is to determine the value of information in relation to the improvement of (optimal) decisions and, in this way, to be able to make well-informed decisions with regard to the procurement of further information.

Value of Information (VoI) is therefore first of all a decision-theoretical, economic concept that allows economic actors to make decisions in situations characterized by great uncertainty, make well-founded decisions on procurement of information. In the determination of ecological thresholds, in marine biodiversity research etc., however, researchers are confronted with a high degree of uncertainty regarding the status of the ecosystems under consideration, while at the same time data collection, i.e., on-site measurements, are very costly and involved. VoI is therefore a suitable tool for well-judged decision-making in the sustainability analysis of ecosystem, in marine biodiversity research and other areas in ecology; it may help determine the extent and the terms of data collection and information gathering in these areas of research.

+ Stay updated: https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/wirtschaftswissenschaften/einrichtungen/voi/

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3rd Symposium on Functional Marine Biodiversity:

7th + 8th September 2021, online

4 Sessions:

- Disturbance and Networks in Ecology
- Dispersal and Movement
- Justice and Conflict in Conservation
- Planning and Projection for an Uncertain Future

Information about registration and program will follow soon!

symp2021@hifmb.de

COOPERATION

Creating Synergies between International Research Projects

Coordinating an international and transdisciplinary collaborative research action on sustainable ocean research in times of Covid-19 pandemic – that's a challenge the HIFBM accepted. The SynCRAocean project funded by the BMBF started in September 2020. It aims to connect, monitor and create synthesis of the Belmont Forum Oceans 2018 collaborative research projects from over 10 countries together with an international coordination team composed of scientists and science manager. All projects of the CRA Oceans 2018 have set as a goal to participate to the challenge of transdisciplinary research for ocean sustainability in the overall framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). SynCRAocean, coordinated by Dr. Kristin Tietje, is besides its international role assigned with a special function in serving as national single point of information and in supporting the synthesis of the German projects.

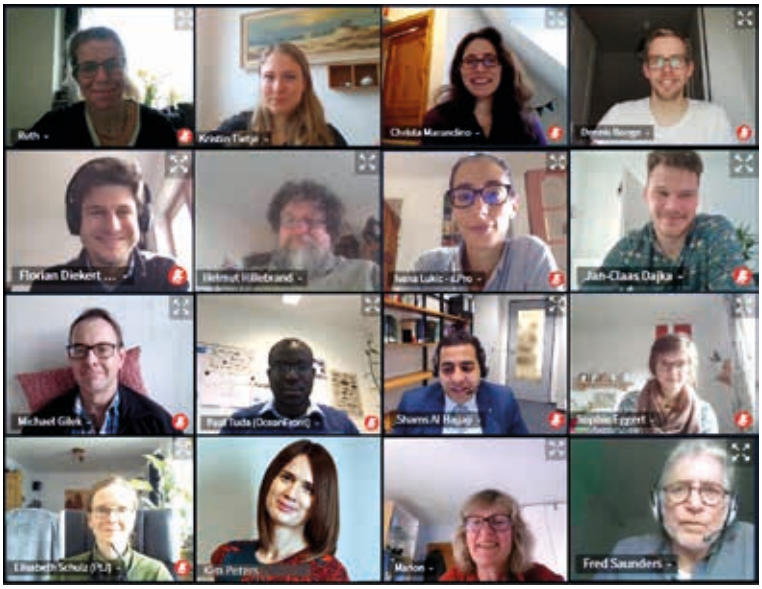


photo © HIFMB

On March 4, the first capacity building meeting of the German projects was hosted by the HIFMB – of course online to give Covid-19 no chance!

RESEARCH

Top Recent Publications

Ryabov A., Kerimoglu O., Litchman E., Olenina I., Roselli L., Basset A., Stanca E. & **Blasius B.** (2021). Shape matters: the relationship between cell geometry and diversity in phytoplankton. Ecology Letters, n/a. DOI: 10.1111/ele.13680

Upmann T., Uecker H., Hammann L. & **Blasius B.** (2021). Optimal stock-enhancement of a spatially distributed renewable resource. Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control, 123, 104060. DOI: 10.1016/j.jedc.2020.104060

Yeakel J.D., Pires M.M., de Aguiar M.A.M., O'Donnell J.L., Guimaraes P.R., Gravel D. & **Gross T.** (2020). Diverse interactions and ecosystem engineering can stabilize community assembly. Nature Communications, 11. DOI: 10.1038/s41467-020-17164-x

Petersen L.-E., Moeller M., Versluis D., Nietzer S., Kellermann M.Y. & **Schupp P.J.** (2021). Mono- and multispecies biofilms from a crustose coralline alga induce settlement in the scleractinian coral Leptastrea purpurea. Coral Reefs. DOI: 10.1007/s00338-021-02062-5

Meyer B., Hüppe L. & Payton L. (2021). Timing requires the right amount and type of light. Nature Ecology & Evolution, 5, 153-154. DOI: 10.1038/s41559-020-01373-0

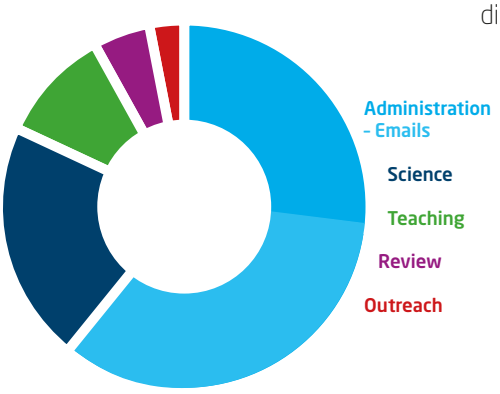
Duarte, C. M., Chapuis, L., Collin, S. P., Costa, D. P., Devassy, R. P., Eguiluz, V. M., **Van Opzeeland, I. C.**, ... & Juanes, F. (2021). The soundscape of the Anthropocene ocean. Science, 371(6529). DOI: 10.1126/science.aba4658

+ More on google scholar: bit.ly/HIFMB-publications

VIEW FROM NORTHWEST #7

Everyday is Emailday

Do you also sometimes wonder how your working days disappeared and you can't remember what you actually did? At least I was wondering – and tracked my work for half a year. Initially, I only did this for myself out of curiosity, but some of the results were quite interesting, so I decided to share them here. I definitely do not support the unhealthy bragging about working hours often encountered in science, so this is all about relative working hours – and only about actual working hours, as it excludes lunches, coffee breaks, or informal chatting about work-(un)-related topics.



So I tracked 6 different "projects", science (= research), teaching, reviewing, outreach and administration, the latter separated for duties attached to the university and to the HIFMB. Scientific research stood for 21% of time, which was split almost equally between discussing science (commenting on lab's manuscripts, discussing research) and doing science (reading, doing own data analyses, writing). 10% was teaching, 5% reviewing, and 3% outreach – the latter % being perhaps the one with the strongest effect from COVID-19 measures, i.e., I would estimate this proportion to be larger in "normal" times.

Remains 61% for administration, of which 2/3 were done in a HIFMB context and 1/3 in the context of the university. The overall dominance of administrative issues is not surprising per se, as this category comprises pure administrative issues (budgeting, board meetings), but also more sciency tasks such as organizational & personnel development (including search and thesis committees) as well as project coordination & maintenance. But what was revealing & surprising, when looking into these single tasks, was the fact that almost half of the admin part (and thus ~27% of my total working time!) is … emails.

In fact, I take some pride in having a rather well-cleaned inbox and think of myself as being a responsive person when addressed by email, which I even prefer over other communication forms. But more than 1.25 full working days per week, 2.5 times the hours I can devote to own science? It did not feel that much because it often is a quick reply here and a short filling in date-planners there, many emails I just read, others I can quickly delete. It might be a reason for my mails nowadays having a rather telegram-style grammar and sometimes boiling down to single words ("yes", "no", "perhaps"), which certainly is at the expense of friendliness. But can we do things differently. At least it made me think, e.g., whether my CC lists can be shorter to not fill others' inboxes or whether I should revamp my daily routines. Not sure yet, only thing I know: Everyday is Emailday, because while I wrote this, 23 new emails emerged.

Sincerely, Helmut Hillebrand
Director — Professor of Pelagic Ecology
helmut.hillebrand@hifmb.de

OPEN CALL

HIFMB Integrative Postdoc Pool HIPP Call 2022 soon open for applications

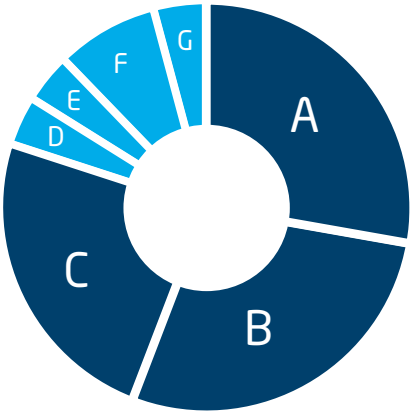
The HIPP Postdoc research fellowships programme enters into its second round. The next cohort starts in January 2022, the call will open in the beginning of April. The new cohort will work under the umbrella topic:
Biodiversity of Anthropocene Oceans: Flows, Networks and Systems Approaches for Boundary Crossing Research

The HIPP is an annual funded opportunity for postdoctoral scientists to develop own research ideas and to actively shape their scientific careers. Its mission is to stimulate integrative and innovative research on functional marine biodiversity and marine conservation, funding is possible for up to three years.
+ Get a notice when the call is open: http://bit.ly/hipp-news

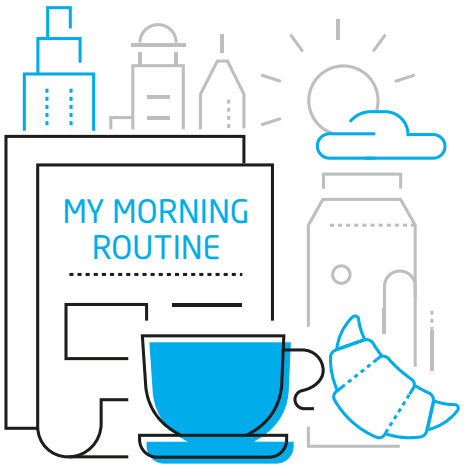
HIFMB TEAM

Fun Fact

In the morning your wake up routine goes something like:



A	28 %	No alarm needed, I´m up at the crack of dawn to tackle the day
B	28 %	Set the alarm for the same time every day
C	24 %	Hit snooze repeatedly then get up and rush around running late
D	4 %	Generally get up in time to eat breakfast, pack lunches and watch a bit of TV
E	4 %	Wake up the dog
F	8 %	„I am hungry!", the little human alarm on two legs never fails
G	4 %	Other



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