



**ZUKÜNFTIGE DER GESELLSCHAFT 43. KONGRESS
DER DEUTSCHEN GESELLSCHAFT FÜR SOZIOLOGIE
JOHANNES GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT JGU MAINZ
28. SEPTEMBER – 02. OKTOBER 2026**

Call for Papers

The Anthropocene Ocean – Navigating towards a Sociology of the Sea

Ad-hoc-Group 43. Congress of the German Society for Sociology (DGS)

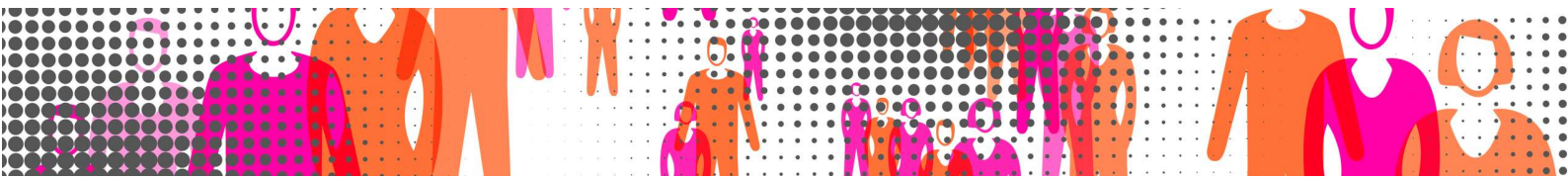
„The Futures of Society“

28.09.-02.10.2026 at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Germany

The sea is key to life on Earth and the future of society, contributing to climate regulation, CO₂ storage, the global economy and energy production. Covering 70% of the planet's surface, the sea supports millions of jobs in the maritime sector, and coastal areas rank among the fastest-growing tourism destinations worldwide. As distant as the sea may seem to some in the 'hinterland,' more than 50% of the planetary oxygen we breathe is produced by marine phytoplankton, and 90% of global trade is transported across the world's oceans.

At the same time, the world's oceans are exposed to major systemic upheavals caused by human-induced global warming, fertilisation, plasticisation and overfishing – summed up by the term “blue acceleration” in the “Anthropocene Ocean” (Jouffray et al. 2020). Its consequences, species extinction, oxygen depletion, acidification, rising sea levels, algal blooms, dying coral reefs, and disruptive storm surges threaten not only marine ecosystems but also rapidly expanding coastal populations (Eriksson & Boonstra 2025). The decline in marine equilibrium is increasingly giving rise to tangible conflicts of interest between resource-oriented use of the oceans on the one hand and marine conservation on the other. As a consequence, the status of the ocean is no longer confined to that of a resource; it has also become a global societal ‘matter of concern’ (Latour 2004; Bogusz 2025).

Despite its fundamental importance, however, the sea has so far played a minor role in sociology. Contributions advocating for the establishment of a ‘Sociology of the Ocean’ (Hannigan 2017), ‘Maritime Sociology’ (Kołodziej & Kołodziej-Durnaś 2022), or a ‘Maritime Sociology for Sustainable Science’ (Ríos & Chicaguala 2024) are rare, scattered and, above all, have not yet reached the German debate. This is all the more striking given that, the Marine Social Sciences and Blue Humanities have gained substantial international scientific and political prominence in parallel with the United Nations' ‘UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030’ (Pelke & Simonn 2023; Bogusz & Pelke 2026). In addition, marine research in the natural and technical sciences is seeking more than ever to establish solution-oriented cooperation with the social sciences (Bogusz et al. 2024). Yet these developments have gone largely unnoticed by sociology. By assembling scholars on the topic in the ad-hoc group, we seek to navigate towards the establishment of a long overdue sociology of the sea.





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We welcome contributions which

- explore key socio-marine entanglements and their impact for social theory and methodology
- discuss the ontological particularity of the geophysical materiality, texture, gravity and planetary scope of the sea
- reflect on infrastructural socio-marine interdependencies throughout sea, science and society
- profile sociological expertise for collaboration with the marine natural and engineering sciences
- frame current transformations of international ocean related science-policy organisation

Quoted Literature

Bogusz, T. 2025. Valuating marine knowledge: Heterogeneous collaborations at the Concarneau marine station. *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 47(3), 37.; Bogusz, T. & N. Pelke (eds., forthcoming). 2026. *Einführung in die Marine Social Sciences und Blue Humanities*, Cham: Springer; Bogusz, T. et al. 2024. Nature and society in marine research – Perspectives for interdisciplinary cooperation in the Anthropocene. *Zenodo*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14887580>; 28; Eriksson, B. & W.J. Boonstra. 2025. Toward contested seas? A review of geopolitical trends at sea in the 21st century. *The Anthropocene Review*, 20530196251334759; Hannigan, J. 2017. *Toward a sociology of oceans*. *Can. Rev. Sociol.* 54, 8-27; Jouffray, J. B et al. 2020. The blue acceleration: the trajectory of human expansion into the ocean. *One earth*, 2(1), 43-54; Kołodziej, A., & Kołodziej-Durnaś, A. 2022. Maritime sociology in the making. *Maritime Spaces and Society*: 3-24; Latour, B. 2004. Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry* 30(2): 225-248; Pelke N & FC Simonn FC (2023) Ocean-human relations in the Anthropocene: mapping trends in sustainability-related marine social sciences articles. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 10:1210133. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2023.1210133>; Ríos C.V. & B.B. Chicaguala. 2024. A Maritime Sociology for Sustainability Science. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 70, 101474.

**We invite submissions of abstracts (maximum one page, including references)
until 30.04.2026**

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Organisation: **Tanja Bogusz** (Leibniz Universität Hannover), **Nane Pelke** (Leibniz Universität Hannover) & **Kurt Rahlitz** (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

*We are delighted to announce the participation of pioneer-colleagues of the Sociology of the Ocean:
Arkadiusz Kołodziej and Agnieszka Kołodziej-Durnaś (University of Szczecin, Poland)
John Hannigan (University of Toronto, Scarborough, Canada)*

