

Sven Bergmann (German Maritime Museum – Leibniz-Institute for Maritime History):
**Communicating Slow Disasters as a Matter of Concern in Transdisciplinary Research
– Experiences in NSW and Other Projects**

In this presentation, I will explore the concepts of "slow disasters" and "slow violence" as discussed by STS researchers such as Kim Fortun, Scott Gabriel Knowles, and scholar Rob Nixon, highlighting their significance in transdisciplinary research. Slow violence refers to gradual and cumulative forms of violence that unfold over time, affecting future generations. Slow disasters, such as war residues and marine pollution, have long-term consequences; in the case of carcinogenic pollutants such as TNT, these often take a certain temporality to develop in living organisms.

The NSW project, which focuses on war remnants in the ocean, brings attention to the lack of research on sea-dumped munitions compared to those on land. Thus, I will discuss slow disasters from three perspectives: space and place, time and temporality, and knowledge production in uncertain fields. For that reason, I will analyse the failure of waste and pollutant containment, resulting in their mobility and spread. Furthermore, I will then delve into the temporal aspects of slow disasters and slow violence, emphasizing the incremental and delayed environmental destruction they entail and discuss the challenges of knowledge production and the complexity of finding solutions for intricate environmental problems. Concluding from this, I will criticize simplistic solutionism and emphasize the need to consider different scales and perspectives when addressing environmental issues. However, addressing the issue of underwater munitions is complicated due to the ecological importance of wreck sites, their cultural heritage significance, and the necessity of a sensitive approach. Finally, due to the complexity of dealing with underwater munitions, I will present how important a sensitive and transdisciplinary approach is.

Dr Sven Bergmann is a senior researcher and curator at the German Maritime Museum - Leibniz Institute of Maritime History (DSM) in Bremerhaven, Germany. At the institute, he coordinates the exhibition and research area Ship and Environment. Trained as a cultural anthropologist and STS (Science & Technology Studies) researcher, his research in recent years has focused on what he calls "speculative ecologies", such as problematising various forms of marine pollution and sea change. At the DSM, he has led the North Sea Wrecks project as coordinator since 2019 and was responsible for the conception of the travelling exhibition "Toxic Legacies of War" with his team.

Recent publications include:

Bergmann et al. (2022) North Sea Wrecks - An interdisciplinary approach towards understanding the risks posed by wrecks containing munitions in the North Sea, MARESEC Conference Proceedings: <https://zenodo.org/record/7149216#.Y3vmvoSZM2w>.

Bergmann/Grassel (2022) Mikroplastik und TNT. Unterschiedliche Regime der Problematisierung von Meeresmüll. In: WerkstattGeschichte 85, 55-75.

Bergmann (2022) Speculative Ecologies: Salmon Farming and Marine Microplastics as Slow Disasters. In: Lettow, Susanne/Nessel, Sabine, eds: Ecologies of Gender: Contemporary Nature Relations and the Nonhuman Turn. London: Routledge, 206-226.