

Humanoid oceans or an ocean of humanoids?

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The project 'Humanoid Oceans' examines the historical development of the Law of the Sea in the second half of the 20th century and its potential importance for modern-day decision-making. The project examines the grave prediction that the world's oceans are on the brink of turning against humankind. Overfishing, ocean acidification, and climate change have altered the oceans. The 'humanoid oceans', the oceans shaped by human action and technology, have the potential to strike back, unless we change the way we treat the ocean. The project examines the evolution, problems, and potential of ocean governance through four main thematic strands: *nature*, *law*, *practice* and *people*. It illuminates the complexity of ocean governance and identifies outstanding issues by using historical evidence and processes. Emphasizing human action and human impact, especially in political arenas like the United Nations, the project examines the importance of individual actors to law-making processes in the Law of the Sea Convention from a historical perspective. It aims to publish a series of articles on the following main thematic clusters:

Nature: The first article deals with the specific conditions of ocean space, which differ drastically from terrestrial conditions. It illuminates the relationship between humans and the oceans from a historical viewpoint and asks how interactions have shaped human understandings of the ocean and, by extension, how they have determined human engagement with ocean governance-to-be. In particular, the article discusses the concept of the ocean as the 'last frontier' on earth.

Law: This article traces back the attempts of the 2018 BBNJ to early efforts in the United Nations 1967 Ad Hoc Seabed Committee. It compares past solutions developed by UN diplomat Arvid Pardo and sea activist Elisabeth Mann Borgese with the 2018 solutions, trying to identify parallels, similarities and differences with regard to the 1967 and 2018 negotiations

Practice: A third article explores a number of groups who have been active in the decision making process during UNCLOS III. It tries to determine their overall impact and grapples with the general issue of how much single actors or groups of actors matter in the United Nations law making process.

People: The fourth article examines groups affected by the Law of the Sea Convention. It focuses on the concerns of first nations and their right to the coastline in light of the fact that the United Nations is organized around nation states. It ponders whether the principle of *common heritage of humankind* has sufficiently addressed the concerns of first nations. The article compares two cases, in which the groups of first nations have stronger and weaker rights in their respective countries. One case will be the Sami people at the coast of Norway and the other one the coastal Aboriginal tribes in Australia.

During my stay at the RCC, I intend to work on the first thematic strand in my project. In the article concerning *nature*, I hope to discuss human-ocean relations through the lens of environmental history in order to gain a broader understanding of changes in the perception of ocean space and the fragility of ocean environment.