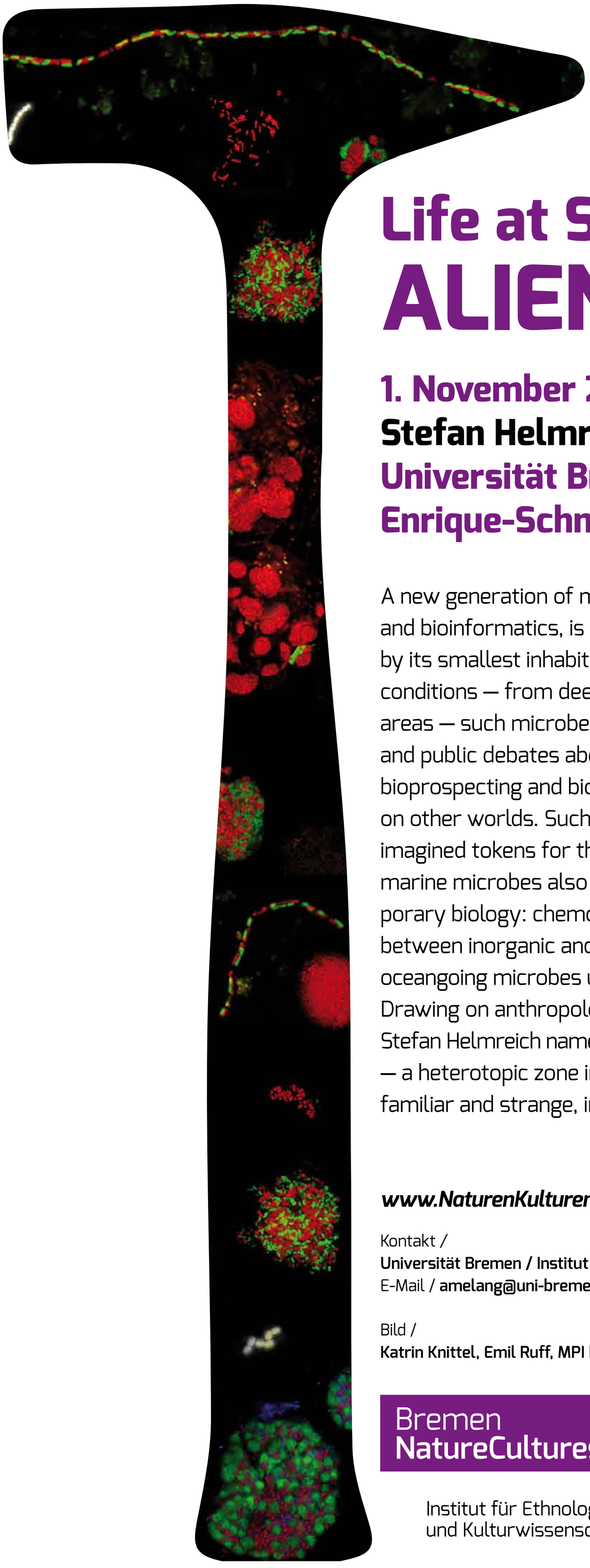

Life at Sea
ALIEN OCEAN

1. November 2016 / 18:15 - 19:45 Uhr /
Stefan Helmreich, MIT, USA /
Universität Bremen / Rotunde im Cartesium / Enrique-Schmidt-Str. 5 //

A new generation of marine biologists, employing genomics and bioinformatics, is coming to see the sea as animated by its smallest inhabitants: marine microbes. Thriving in extreme conditions — from deep-sea volcanoes to methane-rich coastal areas — such microbes are becoming key figures in scientific and public debates about the origin of life, climate change, bioprospecting and biotechnology, and even the possibility of life on other worlds. Such microbes are fresh, technoscientifically imagined tokens for the life the sea symbolizes. But research into marine microbes also undoes the dearest categories of contemporary biology: chemosynthetic metabolisms breach boundaries between inorganic and organic, and lateral gene transfer among oceangoing microbes unravels steady conceptualizations of species. Drawing on anthropological work with marine microbiologists, Stefan Helmreich names this new double-visioned sea the alien ocean — a heterotopic zone in which worldly nature oscillates between familiar and strange, in which the very category of life is at sea. /

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