

Symposium Physics of Biological and Synthetic Active Matter (SYBS)

jointly organized by
the Biological Physics Division (BP),
the Chemical and Polymer Physics Division (CPP), and
the Dynamics and Statistical Physics Division (DY)

Carsten Beta
Institut für Physik und Astronomie
Karl-Liebknecht-Str. 24/25
14476 Potsdam-Golm
beta@uni-potsdam.de

Holger Stark
Institut für Theoretische Physik
Straße des 17. Juni 135
10623 Berlin
holger.stark@tu-berlin.de

Active matter is formed by entities with an internal driving mechanism, that consumes energy and keeps the system constantly out of equilibrium. Prominent examples from the living world are motor-driven biopolymer networks and motile microorganisms. Synthetic systems, such as in-vitro motility assays or artificial microswimmers can mimic processes in biological active matter but also help to explore fundamental questions of non-equilibrium systems. This symposium will bring together the communities that work on biological and synthetic active matter to explore similarities and differences in the design principles of active motion, the emergent collective dynamics such as swarming, and the responses to external fields including the paradigmatic case of chemotaxis.

Overview of Invited Talks and Sessions

(Lecture room H0105)

Invited Talks

SYBS 1.1	Tue	9:30–10:00	H 0105	Bacterial collective behaviours — ●KNUT DRESCHER
SYBS 1.2	Tue	10:00–10:30	H 0105	Nonlinear dynamics of beating cilia and flagella: Swimming, steering, and synchronization — ●BENJAMIN M. FRIEDRICH
SYBS 1.3	Tue	10:30–11:00	H 0105	Learning to navigate in dynamic environments: animal behavior and artificial intelligence — ●ANTONIO CELANI
SYBS 1.4	Tue	11:15–11:45	H 0105	Suspensions of active colloids — ●CECILE COTTIN-BIZONNE, FÉLIX GINOT, ISAAC THEURKAUFF, CHRISTOPHE YBERT
SYBS 1.5	Tue	11:45–12:15	H 0105	Spontaneous chiral symmetry breaking in active fluids — ●JÖRN DUNKEL

Sessions

SYBS 1.1–1.5	Tue	9:30–12:15	H 0105	Physics of Biological and Synthetic Active Matter
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Related Sessions

Biological Physics Division (BP)

Active Matter, Fri 9:30–12:00 (H2013)
Poster Active Matter, Tue 14:00–16:00 (Poster B)

Dynamics and Statistical Physics (DY)

Active Matter I, Mon 10:00–13:15 (BH-N 243)
Active Matter II, Mon 15:30–19:00 (BH-N 243)
Active Matter III, Wed 15:00–18:15 (BH-N 243)
Poster Active Matter, Thu 15:30–18:00 (Poster A)

SYBS 1: Physics of Biological and Synthetic Active Matter

Time: Tuesday 9:30–12:15

Location: H 0105

Invited Talk SYBS 1.1 Tue 9:30 H 0105
Bacterial collective behaviours — ●KNUT DRESCHER — Max Planck Institute for Terrestrial Microbiology — Department of Physics, Philipps-Universität Marburg

In nature, bacteria often engage in a range of collective behaviors. In this presentation, I will demonstrate how two bacterial collective behaviors, swarming and biofilm formation, are related by physical interactions, chemical signaling, and dynamical transitions. I will show how these collective behaviors arise from cell-cell interactions, and the physiological state of individual cells. Furthermore, I will introduce new experimental methods for investigating bacterial collective behaviors.

Invited Talk SYBS 1.2 Tue 10:00 H 0105
Nonlinear dynamics of beating cilia and flagella: Swimming, steering, and synchronization — ●BENJAMIN M. FRIEDRICH — cfaed, TU Dresden, Dresden, Germany

Cilia and flagella represent a best-seller of nature: their regular bending waves propel cellular swimmers such as sperm cells or green alga in a liquid. In my talk, I will address the physics of flagellar swimming and how mechanical and chemical signals control biological microswimmers. In the first part, I will present a theory of sperm chemotaxis, i.e. the directed navigation of flagellated sperm cells that follow gradients of signaling molecules released by the egg. Recent experiments revealed that sperm cells of marine invertebrates dynamically switch between two steering modes in a situation-specific manner: steering either fast or slow [1]. We argue that the measurement of a concentration gradient during chemotaxis is corrupted by noise, and compute signal-to-noise ratios below one for physiological conditions. We show that decision making between different steering modes optimally balances the risk of inadvertently steering in the wrong direction by amplifying noise, and the speed of chemotactic re-orientation. Decision making substantially increases the probability to find a target, such as an egg. In a second part, I will discuss flagellar synchronization as an emergent phenomenon in collections of several flagella, which arises from a mutual hydro-mechanical coupling [2,3].

- [1] J.F. Jikeli et al. *Nature Commun.* 6, 2015
- [2] G.S. Klindt et al. *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 117, 2016
- [3] R. Ma et al. *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 113, 2014

Invited Talk SYBS 1.3 Tue 10:30 H 0105
Learning to navigate in dynamic environments: animal behavior and artificial intelligence — ●ANTONIO CELANI — ICTP, Trieste, Italy

I will discuss two examples of difficult navigation tasks in highly dynamical environments. The first one is thermal soaring in birds. Birds and gliders piggyback ascending currents to fly with a reduced expen-

diture of energy, for example, during migration, and to extend their flying range. Flow in the thermals is highly turbulent, which poses the challenge of the orientation in strongly fluctuating environments. The second one is gravitaxis by smart microswimmers. These are self-propelled particles that can sense basic mechanical cues from their surroundings and respond to them in order to reach the highest altitude within some time horizon. We combine numerical simulations of fluid flow with reinforcement learning methods to identify strategies of navigation that can cope with potentially dangerous flow configurations and exploit favorable ones.

15 min. break

Invited Talk SYBS 1.4 Tue 11:15 H 0105
Suspensions of active colloids — ●CECILE COTTIN-BIZONNE, FÉLIX GINOT, ISAAC THEURKAUFF, and CHRISTOPHE YBERT — Institut Lumière Matière, Université Lyon 1, France

We experimentally explore the behavior of active suspensions of self-propelled colloids. At intermediate densities we observe the formation of clusters, resulting from a permanent dynamical merging and separation of active colloids. We have characterized in depth their kinetics of formation and their dynamics which shows vivid translational and rotational motions. These experimental results are discussed in the framework of a simple statistical model that captures quantitatively the measured dynamics. This sheds some new light on the internal organization of the clusters and on the mechanisms underlying their formation. Looking further at the sedimentation profile of the active particles we derive non-equilibrium equation of state of our system. Finally in the dense regime we observe an unexpected non-monotonic behavior of the particles with activity.

Invited Talk SYBS 1.5 Tue 11:45 H 0105
Spontaneous chiral symmetry breaking in active fluids — ●JÖRN DUNKEL — Department of Mathematics, MIT

Recent experiments show that bacterial and other active suspensions in confined geometries can self-organize into persistent flow structures that exhibit spontaneously broken mirror symmetry. To describe these observations within a minimal theoretical framework, we consider generalized Navier-Stokes (GNS) equations that combine a generic linear instability mechanism with a conventional advective nonlinearity. This phenomenological model is analytically tractable and reproduces several experimentally observed phenomena, including spontaneous flows and viscosity reduction in active suspensions. Triad analysis and numerical simulations of the GNS equations further predict that 3D active flows can spontaneously realize chiral Beltrami vector fields that support inverse energy transport from smaller to larger scales.