TITLE: Contribution of plant traits to ecosystem functions as observed by eddy covariance measurements

CONTEXT: This is a proposal in the context of the project: ‘Transformational Steps In Synthesis Science’, funded by the University of Minnesota and the Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry.

SYNERGY WITH ONGOING ACTIVITIES: This proposal is a companion proposal to the ongoing proposal: ‘Can plant traits be used to scale ecosystem carbon and water fluxes?’ submitted by Martine Janet van de Weg, Han Dolman and Peter van Bodegom.

OUTLINE: Ecosystem fluxes of carbon, water and energy are determined by ecosystem functional properties and modulated by the current variation of radiation, temperature, water availability and vegetation state. While ecosystem functional properties, like the functional dependencies of GPP and TER on environmental variables, which can be summarized as (inherent) water-use efficiency, radiation-use efficiency, A/g or dFlux/dClimate at standardized conditions, typically vary on long timescales, from annual to decadal or longer, the current conditions of temperature, water availability and vegetation state typically vary on instantaneous, diurnal or annual timescales.

Recent analyses of the FLUXNET dataset have shown that much of the observed spatial and temporal variation of ecosystem fluxes can be explained and scaled by information on soil, climate and vegetation structure, without considering the characteristics of the individual plants occurring at the FLUXNET sites (e.g. Jung et al. 2010, Beer et al. 2010, Mahecha et al. 2010). This is – for current conditions - not a surprise, considering species selection and adaptation of individual plants. However in the face of climate change this may become different, if environmental conditions change more rapidly than species selection and/or plant adaptation.

The aim of this study is to identify the contribution of plant traits to ecosystem
functional properties, which is currently hidden by – ‘perfect’ - selection of species and adaptation of individual plants. We attempt to do this by identifying the correlation structure between relevant ecosystem functional properties, soil, climate, vegetation and the multivariate spectrum of plant traits (e.g. Wright et al. 2004). This correlation structure may provide the basis for an assessment of vegetation functioning under rapid climate change.

Methods

We will analyze the correlation structure in the data-matrix of relevant ecosystem functional properties, characteristics of climate, soil and vegetation, and plant traits on large spatial scales, starting at FLUXNET sites, aiming at spatial interpolation.

So far such analyses were impossible due to lack of plant trait information. We expect that this lack of plant trait information will be overcome by the combination of measurements of plant traits at FLUXNET sites, the development of a joint plant trait database (TRY, Kattge et al. 2011) and new methods for statistical interpolation of the plant trait matrix (Shan et al. 2012).

By analyzing plant trait information on the individual, species and PFT level we will be able to identify their specific contributions.

References


### PROPOSED SITES TO BE INVOLVED

All sites in the LaThuile dataset will be considered for this project. Sites will need to represent different vegetation types, environmental conditions and climate regions.

**Data required**

- Ecosystem fluxes of energy, water and carbon
- Climate characteristics
- Soil characteristics
- Vegetation characteristics (LAI and species abundance, at least the dominant species)
- Plant traits (for at least the dominant species)
PROPOSED RULES FOR CO-AUTHORSHIP

La Thuile FLUXNET data policy will be applied.

CVs:

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2010-ongoing  Scientist at the MPI for Biogeochemistry, Jena, DE
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