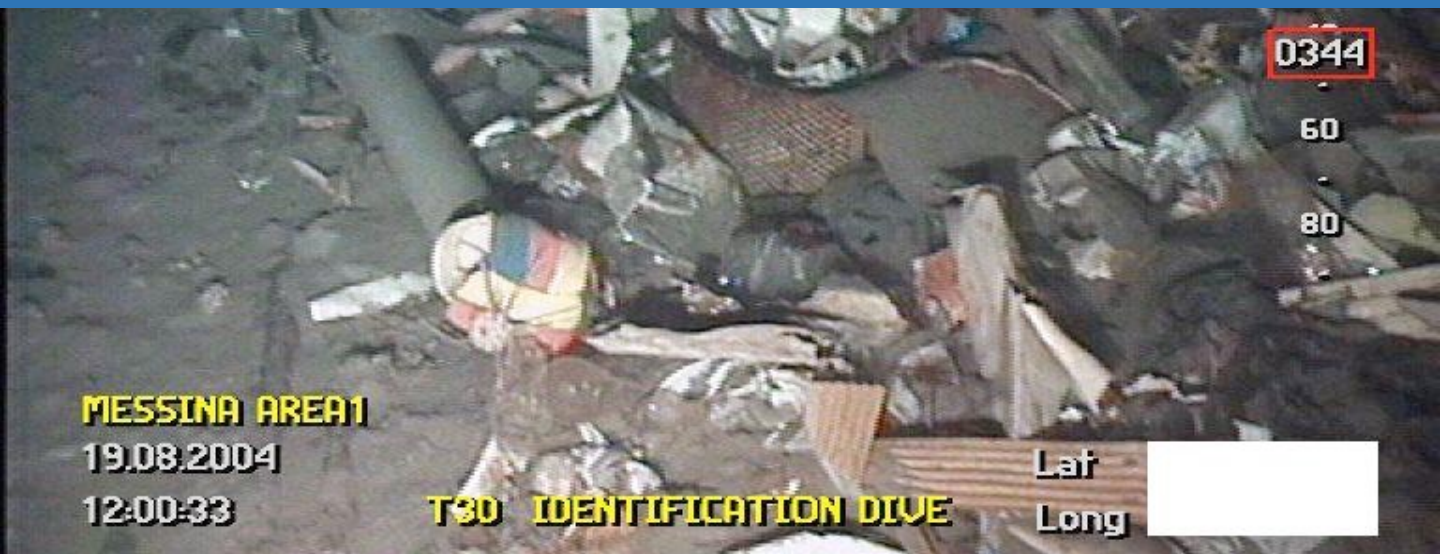


Deep trouble

Around 70% of plastic sinks, but there is currently no global estimate into how much plastic is present in the deep sea. Most seabed surveys have focussed on the shallower continental shelves, however roughly half the earth's surface is deeper sea bed where fewer studies have been concentrated as this environment is challenging and expensive to explore. What we do know, is that plastic has been found on the seabed in every sea and ocean, even at depths exceeding 7000m.



Deep sea plastic is likely to have travelled a long distance on the surface of the sea before being fouled by marine organisms and sinking. It will then be swept in ocean currents and affected by the topography of the area before settling on the seabed with other litter such as fishing gear and tyres. A recent study has even found microplastics and fibres in the deep sea sediment. Their presence in every sediment sample taken suggests that microplastic is abundant in the deep sea.

