

2nd International Conference

THE CROSSROAD OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Paradoxes of energy transition and global inequalities

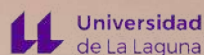
Barcelona, 3 - 4 September 2025



Universitat Oberta de Catalunya



Universitat de Barcelona



Universidad de La Laguna



Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya



Centre d'Estudis de Dret Ambiental de Tarragona



International Catalan Institute for Peace



Grant PID2023-146791NB-I00 funded by MCIU /AEI /10.13039/501100011033 / ERDF, EU.



gLAWcal - Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development



ESIL Interest Group on International Environmental Law



ESIL Interest Group on the European & International Rule of Law

Concept Note

The need for an energy transition has never been more urgent than in the context of the ongoing climate and environmental crises. As global temperatures continue to rise, driven by the over-exploitation of fossil fuels, the consequences of inaction are becoming increasingly devastating. Climate change is not only a threat to natural ecosystems but also to human life, as extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and disruptions to food and water supplies disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly in the Global South. The shift towards renewable energy is critical to mitigating the worst effects of climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

However, this transition must be carefully managed to prevent the perpetuation of existing inequalities and ensure that it does not come at the cost of human rights, social justice, or environmental degradation in the regions already most affected by industrial exploitation and resource extraction.

The energy transition towards renewable energy sources, primarily driven by the Global North, has led to an increase in conflicts in the Global South, particularly due to the negative impacts on human rights and the environment stemming from the planning and implementation of renewable energy projects. Additionally, the extraction of essential minerals for renewable energy production, such as lithium, cobalt, and copper, is often linked to social and environmental conflicts in the Global South. These activities, both in renewable energy projects and mineral extraction, reflect the continuation of the extractivist logic characteristic of fossil fuel-based models, reproducing neocolonial dynamics of wealth accumulation.

In this context, the energy transition raises complex challenges, particularly when considering its environmental and social impacts. While the transition to renewable energy is necessary, it should not ignore the adverse effects it can have on human rights and the environment, especially in the Global South. The production and extraction of raw materials for renewable energy technologies – such as cobalt, lithium, and other minerals – often lead to severe social and environmental consequences. These impacts include violations of workers' rights, displacement of local communities, destruction of ecosystems, and the exacerbation of existing socio-economic inequalities. Moreover, these environmental and social issues are frequently exacerbated by the failure of States to adequately incorporate human rights and environmental considerations into their policies, allowing business interests to take precedence over the welfare of affected communities.

Despite the growing recognition of these issues, many State policies fail to adequately address or prioritize the social and environmental impacts of renewable energy projects and mineral extraction. This oversight reflects a broader tendency for governments to prioritize economic growth and energy independence over the human rights and environmental consequences of their policies. The lack of comprehensive environmental and social assessments, coupled with weak regulatory frameworks, has allowed business actors to exploit natural resources without due consideration for the communities affected. In many instances, the State's role in facilitating or even promoting such activities, without enforcing robust human rights and environmental standards, exacerbates the negative consequences faced by vulnerable populations.

Organizing Institutions

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

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Centre d'Estudis de Dret Ambiental de Tarragona

ESIL Interest Group on the European & International Rule of Law

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gLAWcal - Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development

Conference Chairs

Mariona Cardona-Vallès, *Open University of Catalonia*

Bettina Steible, *Open University of Catalonia*

Daniel Iglesias Márquez, *University of La Laguna*

Scientific Committee

Mar Campins Eritja, *University of Barcelona*

Antoni Pigrau Solé, *University Rovira i Virgili - Centre d'Estudis de Dret Ambiental de Tarragona (CEDAT)*

Paolo Davide Farah, *West Virginia University & gLAWcal – Global Law Initiatives for Sustainable Development, UK*

Ana Garcia Juanatey, *CEI International Affairs*

Day 1 – 3 September

09:00 – 09:15 Registration

09:15 – 09:30 Welcome and opening remarks

09:30 – 10:15 **KEYNOTE LECTURE: Critical minerals for the energy transition: a complex challenge for international law and EU law**

Xavier Fernández Pons, Associate Professor of Public International Law, Universitat de Barcelona

10:15 – 11:30 **PANEL 1 - Legal tensions in the energy transition**
Chair: Daniel Iglesias, University of La Laguna

Just energy transition or just another transition? (Re)examining the role of expropriation for climate justice.

Tina Kotzé, Research and Didactics Lead for Law & Ethics at Boston City Campus / Research Associate at the University of Pretoria

The role of states in balancing renewable energy development and biodiversity protection: the case of wind energy permitting in Europe and ASEAN.

Mei-Line Le Goueff-Duong, qualified lawyer and member of the Paris Bar Association and lecturer at the University Sorbonne Nord

How Clean is 'Clean' Energy? The EU's Green Transition and Environmental Justice in the Case of Serbia's Potential Lithium Mining

Darjana Macanovic, Legal advisor at Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute – RERI, Belgrade, Serbia

The Paradox of Clean Energy: Regulatory Asymmetries and the Uneven Geographies of Transition.

Albert Cucurull, European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 12:45 **KEYNOTE LECTURE: Transnational Legal Ordering of the Energy Transitions: Fragmentation, Contestation, and the Global South**

Paolo Davide Farah, full professor, West Virginia University

12:45 - 13:45 **PANEL 2 – Environmental crimes and environmental justice enforcement**
Chair: Gastón Medici, University of Barcelona

Hidden Crime in the Energy Transition: Labor Exploitation in the Green Energy Industry and the Means of Combating It

Associate Professor, National University of Technology and Science Politehnica Bucharest

Victims, Violence and the Void: Rethinking ICC Complementarity for Environmental Crimes in Energy Conflicts

Harkikan Sehgal, Lecturer, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University, India

Yasuni and Ogoni: the long road towards environmental justice

Carmen Rita Gomez de Larrea, Junior associate at the Energy, Infrastructure and Public Law Department at Baker McKenzie

13:45 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 16:00 **PANEL 3 – Trade, investment, and the energy transition**
Chair: Miguel Ángel Elizalde, Open University of Catalonia

Exploitation of resources in the Global South: Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources Vs Obligation to Freely Trade, what should prevail?

Daria Boklan, Professor of Law deputy-head of the International Law department of National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Analyzing the Effectiveness of Fossil Fuel Subsidies Prohibitions in the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability in Light of the International Investment Law Regime

Ted Gleason, Associate Professor of Law, Grenoble Ecole de Management

Adapting investment treaty protection to support the energy transition

Nicolò Andreotti, PhD candidate in International Law, University of Padua

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 17:15 **PANEL 4: Setting minimum thresholds for energy access**
Chair: Briana Bombana, Open University of Catalonia

The concept of dignity thresholds: minimum core obligations of socioeconomic rights in a context of eco-social crisis.

Ana García Juanatey, CEI International Affairs/Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya

A explicit connection between access to energy and the satisfaction of socioeconomic rights: The Case of Cañada Real in Madrid

Rafael Cid Rico, Gentium

20:30 **Social dinner at El Menjador de la Beckett (Optional; the participation requires pre-confirmation through the registration link, and prepayment).**

Day 2 – 4 September

09:00 – 09:45 **KEYNOTE LECTURE: Regulating the Global Risks of Deep Seabed Mining: Climate Change, Ecosystems, and the Norwegian Arctic Case**

Sandra Cassotta, Associate Professor in International, Environmental and Energy Law, Aalborg Universitet

09:45 – 10:45 **PANEL 5 – Lithium, land, and law: energy transitions and indigenous rights**
Chair: Mar Campins Eritja, University of Barcelona

Legal Complexities of Chinese Lithium Investment in the Lithium Triangle: Environmental Governance, Labor Law, and Indigenous Rights.

Monika Prusinowska, Ramón y Cajal Fellow, Department of Criminal Law and Criminal Science, and Public International Law and International Relations, University of Barcelona

Exploring Bolivia's Lithium ambition through an expanded energy justice lens.

Romain Mauger, Iberian Centre for Research in Energy Storage (CIIAE), Cáceres, Spain / Paola Villavicencio Calzadilla, INSTA - Serveis Jurídics Ambientales, Spain, University Rovira i Virgili (URV), Spain and North-West University (NWU), South Africa

From Conflict to Collaboration: Reforming Dispute Resolution in Energy Transition Investment Projects to Respect Indigenous Land Rights in Africa and Asia.

Irene Kariuki, Law Society of Kenya & the University of Nairobi

10:45 – 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 – 12:30 **PANEL 6 – Corporate responsibility and due diligence in the transition supply chain**
Chair: Mariona Cardona Vallès, Open University of Catalonia

Revisiting the Resource Due Diligence in Democratic Republic of Congo in a time of crashing war

Zeina Moneer, Senior Research Fellow at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden

Human rights, (in)justice and governance in an age of “transition”: reflections emerging from documentation in lithium extraction sites and along the global production chain of electric vehicles

Sacha Feierabend, PhD researcher, International Institute for Social Studies, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, and Senior researcher, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) / José Aylwin, Observatorio Ciudadano Chile

The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive: Implementing Just Transitions Internationally Through Global Supply Chains?

Inés Racionero Gómez, Pre-doctoral Fellow (FPI) in Public International Law in Universitat de Barcelona

The role of data and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in advancing a just minerals transition in the Global South

Marco Angelo S. Zaplan, University of the Philippines Population Institute, Gov Data Initiative, and the Asian Development Bank

12:30 – 13:30

PANEL 7 – Justice in the energy transition through litigation and human rights frameworks

Chair: Bettina Steible, Open University of Catalonia

Rethinking Remedies: A Latin American Perspective on Just Transition Litigation

Flávia Do Amaral Vieira, Research Fellow Tilburg University / Bruna Singh, PhD Candidate Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg

Justice in the Energy Transition: To Be or Not to Be? The Shaping Role of (Human Rights) Courts

Ludovica d’Apote, PhD LEES - International and Public Law, Ethics and Economics for Sustainable Development, University of Milan

The Aarhus Convention

Karlos Castilla, Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 - 16:15

PANEL 8 – Rethinking just transition: Theoretical frameworks for environmental justice
Chair: Laura Presicce, Open University of Catalonia

Just transition in international environmental law: potentials, risks, and normative suggestions

Begüm Acar, Harvard Law School PSVF Kaufman Fellow at Doğa Derneği (BirdLife Turkey)

Environmental Justice and Regulatory Inequality: A Governance Perspective

Deniece M. Aiken, legal scholar and researcher, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonian Maritime Academy

Green Extraction, Blue Destruction: Why Deep Seabed Mining Demands an Earth System Law Response

Işık Girgiç, PhD Researcher, Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development, Utrecht University

To Drill or Not to Drill Is Partially the Question: Facilitating Energy Justice for Global South Oil and Gas Countries Through International Law

Chitzi Ogbumbada, Lecturer in Law, University of Exeter, Cornwall, UK

16:15 – 16:30

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS