



**Governance beyond the Anthropocene:  
Ecological Issues in European Political Practice and Thought**

**University of Hertfordshire**

**22 June 2018**

**DeHavilland Campus, Law Court Building, W128**

**Programme**

- 09.00-09.30 Registration and Coffee (W126)
- 09.30-10.00 Welcome
- 10.00-11.00 Panel I: Contemporary European Environmental Politics
- “Secure, affordable and sustainable? The European Union and the energy trilemma” *Dr Francesca Batzella*, University of Hertfordshire
  - “Arctic Governance and the Anthropocene - the Politics of Responsibility” *Dr Hannes Hansen-Magnusson*, Cardiff University
- 11.00 -11.30 Coffee Break (W126)
- 11.30-13.00 Panel II: Geopower, Climate Change and Ecological Political Theory
- “Climate Change and Post-Political Communication” *Prof Phil Hammond*, London South Bank University
  - “The Anthropocene Dilemma: Governing for or against Climate Change” *Prof David Chandler*, University of Westminster
  - “Geopower, nature and government” *Dr Benoît Dillet*, University of Bath
- 13.00-14.00 Lunch Break (W126)
- 14.00-15.30 Panel III: Environmental Regulations: European Cases and Challenges
- “European Union and legal responses to environmental harms” *Dr Emanuela Orlando*, University of Sussex

- “Planetary and other ecological boundaries in EU law” *Prof David Langlet*, University of Gothenburg
  - “Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Justice in International Law” *Dr Virginie Barral*, University of Hertfordshire
- 15.30-16.00 Coffee Break (W126)
- 16.00-17.30 Panel IV: Environmental Governance beyond the Anthropocene
- “The Politics of the Anthropocene: Temporality, Ecology, Indigeneity” *Dr Elisa Randazzo and Hannah Richter*, University of Hertfordshire
  - “Ecological issues and community engagement” *Dr Alice Hague*, James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen
  - “Sustainability and Citizenship: Sociological indicators for a change in direction, *Dr John McCormack*, University of Hertfordshire
- 18.30 Workshop Dinner: The Taste of India, Hatfield

## **Abstracts**

### **Secure, affordable and sustainable? The European Union and the energy trilemma**

*Dr Francesca Batzella, University of Hertfordshire*

EU Energy policy has often been described as a field of a hybrid nature. Despite energy being at the very origin of the process of European integration, the development of an EU energy policy has been everything but smooth or coherent. Lacking a specific legal basis on energy, an EU energy policy has developed in the broader framework of building a single European market. Since then, energy policy has mainly been about building a liberalised and competitive energy market. It has been only relatively recently that human induced deterioration of the environment and climate has triggered a need to adjust energy policy. In this context, aspects like climate change, environmental protection and security have emerged in this policy field. Indeed, according to the most recent framework for EU energy and climate policy, the Energy Union, the aims of the EU energy policy are to deliver secure, affordable and sustainable energy. This phrasing echoes what in the literature is often referred to as the energy trilemma meaning that attempts to address these objectives may conflict with one another. Indeed, attempts to secure energy or to have affordable energy might lead to negative impacts on sustainability and vice versa. This paper aims to assess to what extent the EU has been able to juggle the three objectives of secure, affordable and sustainable energy. In particular, the paper aims to explore whether all the three objectives are deemed equally important and, if not, under what conditions a specific objective becomes predominant on the EU agenda. In doing so, the paper builds on theoretical frameworks, models and hypotheses offered by public choice and public administration literature. The paper builds on EU official documents, secondary literature, grey literature and interview data.

### **Arctic Governance and the Anthropocene - the Politics of Responsibility**

*Dr Hannes Hansen-Magnusson, Cardiff University*

Arctic governance is characterised by the attempt to self-consciously devise new policies and a novel kind of politics. It takes place in a context changing environmental conditions, in which the melting of ice changes the way of human interaction in the region, posing new questions about governing spaces as well as revisiting geopolitical issues that had been considered dormant since the 1990s. Responsibility has become a key point of reference in global politics in the meantime and profoundly influenced how state and non-state actors deal with security, economic and environmental governance. The paper takes note of the risen significance of responsibility-led governance but seeks to highlight how this has not led to a clearer arrangement of political decision-making and competences. It particularly highlights two problematiques. First, actors may be responsible for more than one issue area, which signals potential

conflicts of interest. Second, multiple actors may claim responsibility over similar issues. While Arctic governance strives to become resilient to the impact of climate change, and has been hailed as functioning surprisingly well, such indeterminacy hints that there is still room for improvement in the organisational and institutional set-up of Arctic governance.

### **Climate change and post-political communication**

*Prof Philip Hammond, London South Bank University*

As several critics have noted, climate change has become mainstreamed as a 'post-political' issue in recent years. Analysts of the post-political have criticised media research agendas which simply encourage greater consensus, and have instead called for more attention to be paid to the ways in which the media may either promote de-politicisation or work to politicise the issue of climate change. Examples from political rhetoric, celebrity campaigning and news media framings of climate change confirm that particular constructions of the issue do indeed tend to depoliticise it, whether in terms of moral certainty, personal lifestyle choices or consensus agreement. However, this paper argues that attempts to construct a more radical, politicising appeal – through a more properly ecological humility toward nature, a more pronounced anti-consumerism, or a more emotionally-charged mode of address – tend to make matters worse. In practice, greater 'radicalism' also means greater anti-modernism, cutting away the ground of the political agency it ostensibly seeks to promote. The phenomenon of 'post-political' climate change seems to offer us a choice between a techno-managerial administrative consensus on one side, and a repudiation of modernist subjectivity on the other. It may simply be mistaken to assume that there was once a radical core in environmental politics that can be recaptured or reignited so as to overcome the problem of the post-political. Perhaps the greatest mistake in this respect is the idea that greater emotionalism will provide the answer to the post-political condition. In today's circumstances, such emotional appeals tend to further reinforce a therapeutic outlook that encourages us to understand politics in terms of a project of the self rather than changing the world.

### **The Anthropocene Dilemma: Governing for or against Climate Change?**

*Prof David Chandler, University of Westminster*

There is often the assumption that the Anthropocene is just another word for the coming together or intensification of a collection of man-made (anthropogenic) environmental and natural problems and crises, from global warming, to ocean acidification, to plastic pollution and species extinction. If this was case, things would be difficult but there would be no big dilemma beyond any traditional discussions of politics and power regarding distributive priorities. I wish to suggest in this paper that the Anthropocene expresses a dilemma (or maybe a series of dilemmas) that takes us well beyond the problems and

contestations of modernist politics. What if the Anthropocene wasn't a problem to be solved? What if climate change and global warming weren't merely threats to be secured against through resilience and social and technological engineering? What if the more we understood ourselves as 'at war' with the Anthropocene, the worse the problems would be? What if governing against climate change merely encouraged, intensified and reproduced the modes of economic and social being in the world that caused the problems? What if we need instead to govern for (and with and through) the Anthropocene and therefore for climate change, rather than against it? How does this work and what forms of subjectivity and what forms of governance ensue from the reversal of modernist securing assumptions? What does it mean to welcome the Anthropocene? How does this 'welcome' of speculative and creative unfoldings differ from the modernist engineering assumptions of the 'Good Anthropocene'?

### **Geopower, nature and government**

*Dr Benoît Dillet, University of Bath*

### **The EU and the legal responses to transnational environmental harms and crimes**

*Dr Emanuela Orlando, University of Sussex*

Increasing awareness about global and local environmental problems has led to intensified efforts to find appropriate responses to environmental harms and the proliferation of illegal activities against the environment and natural resources. In this context, the phenomenon of environmental crimes has catalysed increasing and specific attention by governments, policymakers, international organizations as well as researchers across different disciplines. From a legal perspective, one of the main challenges relates to the transnational and multi-dimensional nature of the problem and its connection to organised forms of criminal activity and corruption. This is particularly the case for the illegal trafficking of endangered species, and the illegal logging and timber trade. In spite of the pressing relevance and the markedly transnational and global dimension of the problem, the phenomenon of environmental crime is not addressed through an international treaty that specifically defines environmental crime and/or criminalises and sanctions environmentally harmful conducts operating in violation of the law. The international legal and governance framework in this area appears, instead, both normatively and institutionally fragmented, with different regulatory and normative settings and diverse 'sites' of authorities each tackling selected aspects of this multifaceted phenomenon. There are however interesting scholarly findings identifying significant trends towards the establishment of cooperative arrangements as well as more or less formalized processes of interaction between the different international organizations, institutions and actors dealing with environmental crimes.

Against this background, and building upon relevant scholarship in the field of international law and international relations, the presentation will discuss the role and action of the EU in the fight against (transnational) environmental crime with a focus on wildlife and forest crimes. Situating the analysis of the EU's action within the environmental crimes 'regime complex', the presentation will seek to appraise the extent to which the EU can contribute to the further development of international law and to enhance global governance and international cooperation in this area. To this end, the presentation will examine in particular the scope of the EU internal and external competences in the relevant fields of environmental law and criminal law, as well as the external and internal dimension of existing and ongoing EU initiatives aimed to combat the illegal trafficking of endangered species and illegal logging.

### **Planetary and other ecological boundaries in EU law**

*Prof David Langlet, University of Gothenburg*

The notion of planetary boundaries has gained much attention, not least as a way to communicate and concretize the fact that subjecting the planet and its ecosystems to pressures above certain – often contested – levels threatens to disrupt the functioning of fundamental natural systems. Establishing and respecting such boundaries should provide humanity with a “safe operating space” (Rockström et al 2009). A similar understanding is reflected in the fact that the European Union, over the last 30 or so years, has increasingly aimed to establish ecological boundaries in law, i.e. states of the natural environment that should not (normally) be transgressed. However, setting such boundaries and making them relevant entail numerous challenges. Among these are how to define and act on ecological boundaries in relation to pressures that are only partly under the control of the EU? This includes the collective action problem of ensuring that EU actions are not rendered futile by the actions of others while imposing a cost on the EU and its member states. The article explores how the EU legislator and EU Court of justice have approached the idea of ecological boundaries, at global or regional levels, and what strategies, if any, have been employed to deal with the limited geographical and jurisdictional influence of the Union in relation to activities that threaten the keeping of such boundaries.

### **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Justice. Broadening the Notion of Responsibility in International Law**

*Dr Virginie Barral, University of Hertfordshire*

The notion of responsibility in international law involves the failure by a State to fulfil an international commitment. It presupposes the violation of an international obligation for which that State can be held liable. For the State to be held internationally responsible in that sense, the internationally wrongful act must cause damage to another State to whom the obligation was owed. The concept of common but

differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) however does not squarely fit within that scenario of traditional international responsibility. Primarily based on the notions of equity and corrective justice and premised in particular upon the principle of intra-generational equity, CBDR, as a structuring principle of the international legal order, hinges upon responsibility in its moral dimension. Its application involves the elaboration of differentiated legal standards and commitments according to both responsibilities and capabilities of States. Differentiated commitments also work as a condition sine qua none for the recognition of a common responsibility towards environmental protection. Without these, the mere adoption of global environmental protection regimes would simply not have been possible. This paper argues that because it is premised on the notions of equity and justice, the principle of CBDR necessarily calls for a broadening of the understanding of responsibility in international law. The paper also explores whether, beyond the moral dimension of responsibility that is referred to, CBDR may still impinge upon the assessment of international responsibility in its purely legal dimension. It is suggested in particular that CBDR may well constitute a standard against which a State's liability will be evaluated.

### **Ecological issues and community engagement**

*Dr Alice Hague, James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen*

In looking at ecological issues in political practice today, a lot of emphasis has been put on the individual level of engagement and behaviour change for delivery of climate change targets. More recently, community- or local-level engagement is increasingly seen as an opportunity for promoting action to address challenges such as climate change, sustainable energy, and biodiversity loss. While a lot of research has been undertaken with organisations such as Transition Towns, this paper seeks to understand a particular subset of community-level engagement, that is, how, and why, faith-based communities interact with ecological and environmental issues. Taking an interdisciplinary approach and based on an extended period of ethnographic fieldwork with three Christian congregations in Edinburgh, this research seeks to understand what explains environmental engagement by faith communities. It considers the motivations for and practices of ecological engagement by local congregations. The research identifies how faith communities draw on a framework of engagement that includes both theological motivations (including themes that are widely recognised in secular activism such as social and environmental justice) and contextual factors, such as leadership and resources. Environmental engagement is also motivated by a sense of community, and this research identifies the importance of the social context of participation in ecological action as participation in the politics of everyday life. This research points to further consideration of the intersection of faith communities and community-level engagement in ecological issues more broadly, and on our understanding of how community engagement is integrated in the practice of policy-making within Europe.

## **Sustainability and Citizenship: technology, behaviour and governance**

*Dr John McCormack, University of Hertfordshire*

This paper reports on the findings of recent research, undertaken by the University of Hertfordshire, into the subject of sustainable living in master planned communities. Based on 3 case studies of new housing settlements in the south east of England, the paper examines the relationship between the intended sustainability outcomes associated with processes of master planning these communities and the actual outcomes, as reported by residents from these communities in semi-structured interviews, and as observed by the researcher through photographic ethnography. The paper draws attention to the privileged role of design and technology in master planning processes, centred on a common assumption that, through careful design and the installation of particular technologies, sustainability objectives can be met. This privileging of design and technology in the drive for sustainable living contrasts significantly with the relative absence of place management and wider neighbourhood governance strategies for the new settlements. As a consequence, there is little that is communicated to residents in respect of the sustainability intentions associated with their neighbourhood, post occupancy. In addition, the evidence from the research suggests that a lack of effective local governance results in key sustainability commitments contained within master plans in reality being deferred or abandoned, post-occupancy. The paper does, however, point to some evidence of grassroots civil society groups effectively filling the gaps created by master planners vis-à-vis place management and governance.

## **The Politics of the Anthropocene: Temporality, Ecology, Indigeneity**

*Dr Elisa Randazzo and Hannah Richter, University of Hertfordshire*

The notion of the Anthropocene has become instrumental in framing the backdrop against which post-structuralist critical perspectives have developed approaches to governing in an uncertain world to defy the certainty and human-centrism of modernity. But what is the political promise of the Anthropocene? Asking why critical theories might be interested in deploying the concept of the Anthropocene, this paper seeks to critically explore what post-structuralist approaches believe the concept can offer to post-modernity as well as what they believe can be done to achieve the promise of the Anthropocene. The paper engages, in particular, with two popular approaches employed by Critical Theories to operationalise a rationale for governing in the Anthropocene, namely neo-materialist thought and indigenous studies. Exploring the conceptualisation and politics of the Anthropocene in both, we argue that the promise of the Anthropocene relies on and/or revives a number of fundamentally modern presumptions and aspirations which not only call into question to what extent Anthropocenic politics is commensurable with the framework of post-structuralist critique, but also whether it lives up to its own promises, most importantly the final and irrevocable overcoming of the Holocene which encompasses modernity.