

# XVII Interdisciplinary Seminar on Climate, Energy and Sustainability

23 October 2025

9.30 – 11.30 CET

Room 7A.0.16 – Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen and online

## PROGRAMME

Time	Programme
9.15 – 9.30	<b><u>In person:</u></b> welcoming of speakers and participants (breakfast is served) <b><u>Online:</u></b> ZOOM room opens
9.30 – 9.35	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>  <b>Associate Professor Beatriz Martinez Romera</b> , Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance (CLIMA), Faculty of Law; Co-Director of Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research (COPE), University of Copenhagen
9.35 – 10.25	<b>Session 1</b>  <b>Chair: Linnéa Nordlander</b> , Assistant Professor, Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance (CLIMA), Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Roberta Niglio</b>, Recent Graduate, University of Salerno <i>Beyond Success: Understanding the Role of Unsuccessful Human Rights-Based Climate Litigation in Shaping Climate Governance</i></li> <li><b>Sharon Vintage W. Mwangi</b>, University of Nairobi <i>Potential of Sustainable Energy in Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in Kuku Group Ranch, Kenya</i></li> <li><b>Alessandro Di Giusto</b>, LLM Student, University of Louvain</li> </ol>

	<p><i>Evolution of Businesses' Due Diligence from Voluntary to Mandatory Obligations at the Interplay between Business and Human Rights and International Environmental Law</i></p> <p>4. <b>Chioma Vivian Basil</b>, PhD Student, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour &amp; CNRS  <i>A Comparative Analysis of Procedural Justice and Energy-related Rights in the Global South and North</i></p>
10.25 - 10.30	<b>Short Break</b>
10.30 - 11.20	<p><b>Session 2</b></p> <p><b>Chair: Sebastiano Gianino</b>, PhD Student, Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance (CLIMA), Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Kelsey Pailman</b>, PhD Student, University of Groningen  <i>Regulating Hydrogen Harbours: A German and French Comparison Governing Hydrogen Valleys in EU Ports</i></li> <li>2. <b>Carmen Alija Cabero</b>, Recent Graduate, Complutense University of Madrid  <i>Climate change as a geopolitical actor in conflicts: the case of socioenvironmental conflicts related to mining in the Peruvian Andes</i></li> <li>3. <b>Ícaro Darío Núñez Ruiz</b>, Master's Student, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne &amp; co-authors  <i>Rock, Paper Standards: A Legal and Policy Analysis of EU-Canada Critical Minerals Collaboration</i></li> <li>4. <b>Mohammed Safquat Alam</b>, Master's Student, University of Vienna  <i>Environmental Migration due to Riverbank Erosion in Bangladesh: Managing Disasters and Facilitating Internal Rural-Urban Transitions through Skill Development</i></li> </ol>
11.20 - 11.30	<p><b>Concluding Remarks</b></p> <p><b>Associate Professor Beatriz Martinez Romera</b>, Centre for Climate Change Law and Governance (CLIMA), Faculty of Law; Co-Director of Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research (COPE), University of Copenhagen</p>

## ABSTRACTS

**Roberta Niglio, Recent Graduate**

*Beyond Success: Understanding the Role of Unsuccessful Human Rights-Based Climate Litigation in Shaping Climate Governance*

Climate change litigation has become an increasingly important instrument for advancing climate justice. Scholarship, however, has predominantly concentrated on successful cases and their immediate legal effects, leaving limited understanding of how litigation that does not prevail in court may still shape climate governance. The aim of this project is to contribute to addressing this gap by examining the role of unsuccessful human rights-based climate litigation in influencing governance processes. Building on recent debates that highlight how litigation losses may contribute to reframing narratives, mobilizing public opinion, and exerting political pressure, the central research question guiding the study is: How can unsuccessful human rights-based climate litigation influence the development of climate governance frameworks? Adopting a socio-legal approach, the project combines three steps: a comprehensive literature review mapping the relationship between climate litigation and climate governance; systematic analysis of unsuccessful rights-based cases drawn from international databases; and a qualitative empirical inquiry, including interviews with claimants, practitioners, and policymakers. The project aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of climate litigation as a governance tool, moving beyond legal victory or defeat to recognize its indirect yet significant effects on accountability, intergenerational justice, and the evolution of climate governance frameworks.

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**Sharon Vintage W. Mwangi, University of Nairobi**

*Potential of Sustainable Energy in Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in Kuku Group Ranch, Kenya*

Despite technological advances in the 21st Century, rapid population growth, poverty, and limited grid connectivity have led to heavy reliance on biomass fuels in many rural areas. Kuku Group Ranch, a critical wildlife corridor in southern Kenya, faces the challenge of balancing household energy needs with biodiversity conservation. This study assessed the potential for clean energy interventions to support both conservation and livelihoods. It employed a mixed-methods approach that combined 122 household surveys, three focus group discussions, seven key informant interviews, field observations, and spatial analyses. The findings revealed that over 80% of households depend on firewood, contributing to a decline in dense forest cover and a doubling of the amount of bare ground since 2000. Awareness of clean energy is relatively high, but adoption remains limited due to costs and technical barriers. Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis identified solar and improved cookstoves as viable alternatives. In terms of lighting energy, only 30% of the households are connected to the national grid. However, the area has high solar potential, which is more than sufficient to power the ranch entirely with solar. The study concludes that conservation efforts and sustainable energy initiatives can mutually strengthen

each other and recommends scaling off-grid solar solutions, clean cooking technologies, community woodlots, and energy-conscious land use planning.

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**Alessandro Di Giusto, LLM Student, University of Louvain**

*Evolution of Businesses' Due Diligence from Voluntary to Mandatory Obligations at the Interplay between Business and Human Rights and International Environmental Law*

This paper explores the developments of businesses' responsibility in the fields of international human rights and environmental law through the evolution of due diligence concepts and its contribution to human rights and climate change objectives. Considering the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human rights, the debate about businesses' responsibilities in respecting human rights has become more urgent. In line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, business and human rights models have developed from voluntary, business due diligence practices. Gaps and limited performance have led to increased calls for making business obligations mandatory. At the same time, due diligence practices have expanded to include climate change and environmental components, adding to the legal and policy compliance complexity. Focusing on due diligence concepts, this research summarizes advantages, disadvantages and open questions in the process of making mandatory legal responsibilities for businesses at the interplay between human rights and environmental obligations. The 2024 European Union Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive is used as a case study, representing one of the most recent pieces of legislation in the field and with significant implications due to the size of the European Union market and operators.

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**Chioma Vivian Basil, PhD Student, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour & CNRS**

*A Comparative Analysis of Procedural Justice and Energy-related Rights in the Global South and North*

With the aid of the regulatory frameworks in Brazil, Canada, Nigeria and France, this research undertakes a comparative analysis of procedural justice and energy-related rights. It focuses specifically on the legal instruments that establish a connection between energy activities and its impact on fundamental human rights and environmental degradation. These instruments include the France's Duty of Vigilance Law, Nigeria's petroleum Industry Act 2021, Canada's Strategy for Responsible Business Conduct Abroad (2022-2027), the Brazilian Proposed Framework for Business and Human Rights (PL 572/2022), and other related regulations. Through this comparative method, the study examines how these laws and associated case laws reflect procedural justice principles of due process, participation, accountability, and transparency in decision making. The case studies shed more light on the role of courts and regulatory bodies in shaping policies that enhance stakeholder involvement, and protect communities around energy projects from the adverse impact of energy development. By engaging with rights-based claims, litigation trends, and policy responses, this study advances a broad understanding of procedural justice as a framework for strengthening both the practical application of the energy justice

framework and human rights protection. In line with this, it highlights the growing demand for state responsibility and corporate accountability for human rights violations across global energy value chain. Therefore, procedural justice offers a critical lens for advancing energy-related rights protection for a sustainable and equitable energy system across diverse national contexts.

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**Kelsey Pailman, PhD Student, University of Groningen**

*Regulating Hydrogen Harbours: A German and French Comparison Governing Hydrogen Valleys in EU Ports*

The rise of hydrogen valleys in the EU has accelerated the energy transition across value chains, including in sea and inland ports. Ports have become strategic hubs for the production, transport and utilisation of renewable and low-carbon hydrogen and derivatives, such as ammonia and methanol, for three main reasons. First, they act as gateways for regional and international hydrogen trade. Second, existing natural gas infrastructure in ports can be repurposed for hydrogen transmission. Third, ports are located near key hydrogen end-users, including industrial sites and the maritime sector.

Germany and France have emerged as EU frontrunners in developing port-based hydrogen valleys. Both countries are advancing legal frameworks and infrastructure across the hydrogen value chain, while reflecting differing national priorities. Germany emphasises renewable hydrogen imports and long-distance pipeline planning, while France focuses on regional infrastructure, domestic production, and low-carbon hydrogen derived from nuclear energy.

This paper explores how these strategies intersect with broader EU objectives, such as the Hydrogen Strategy and the European Hydrogen Backbone. It highlights the importance of aligning national policies with future EU legal frameworks to ensure coherence. By comparing the regulatory approaches of Germany and France, the paper assesses how legal certainty, cross-border coordination, and flexible regulation can enable ports to play a central role in the EU's evolving hydrogen ecosystem.

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**Carmen Alija Cabero, Recent Graduate, Complutense University of Madrid**

*Climate change as a geopolitical actor in conflicts: the case of socioenvironmental conflicts related to mining in the Peruvian Andes*

This work analyzes how climate change should be understood not only as a mere external “stressor” or “threat multiplier”, but also as a geopolitical actor within conflicts, a constituent part of the conflict. This perspective requires moving beyond the traditional anthropocentric approach in order to understand socio-environmental conflicts in a more holistic manner. The research tests this hypothesis using the cases of socioenvironmental mining-related conflicts in the Peruvian Andes.

Methodologically, the study combines a critical literature review on political geography (Doreen Massey) and ecological posthumanism (Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Timothy Morton, and Jane Bennett) with documentary analysis. This approach proposes a conceptual framework where climate change, manifested through glacial retreat, droughts, and rainfall variability, is not an external factor but an inherent part of the conflict's assemblage. It is proposed that climate change acts as a "hyperobject" (Morton, 2013), a multi-scalar phenomenon that contributes to reconfiguring territoriality and transforming power relations between communities, the state, and mining companies in the studied conflicts.

The conclusion is that when addressing socio-environmental conflicts, climate change governance requires approaches that recognize the climate as a geopolitical agent, integrating climate adaptation with territorial justice and new co-governance arrangements.

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**Ícaro Darío Núñez Ruiz, Master's Student, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne & co-authors**

*Rock, Paper Standards: A Legal and Policy Analysis of EU-Canada Critical Minerals Collaboration*

Critical minerals are indispensable for the clean energy transition, yet their extraction and trade often generate severe environmental and social harms, creating the challenge of reconciling supply security with sustainability. This paper examines how the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and subsequent initiatives have shaped the governance of sustainability standards in the EU-Canada critical minerals partnership. CETA establishes a normative framework that integrates environmental and social objectives into trade policy, reinforced by the 2021 Strategic Partnership on Raw Materials and the 2025 G7 Critical Minerals Action Plan. These instruments affirm commitments to uphold domestic environmental laws, promote corporate responsibility, and foster cooperative approaches to trade-related sustainability. Nonetheless, CETA's non-binding dispute settlement system—based on consultations and expert panels without sanctions—limits enforceability and risks undermining credibility in sectors where sustainability violations are frequent. Provisions such as the “clean hands” clause in investment protection suggest ways to link investor rights to sustainability obligations, while the G7's proposal for “standards-based markets” points to new opportunities for embedding environmental and social safeguards. The analysis concludes that CETA's role is primarily agenda-setting rather than enforceable, and that binding mechanisms will be required to secure sustainability in global mineral supply chains.

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**Mohammed Safquat Alam, Master's Student, University of Vienna**

*Environmental Migration due to Riverbank Erosion in Bangladesh: Managing Disasters and Facilitating Internal Rural-Urban Transitions through Skill Development*

Riverbank erosion constitutes a persistent yet insufficiently addressed environmental challenge of the 21st century, displacing large populations annually and driving rural-to-urban migration. Countries including Bangladesh, India, Cambodia and Nigeria are recurrently affected, while even developed contexts, such as the United States, experience substantial infrastructural and ecological disruptions.

This study focuses on Bangladesh, a deltaic nation intersected by over 700 rivers; where seasonal monsoon flooding results in extensive land loss. It interrogates two central research questions: (1) How effective are current disaster management strategies & to what extent can “awareness campaigns” be effective in Bangladesh concerning riverbank erosion? (2) To what extent can skill development training programs support long-term adaptation and integration of riverbank erosion-displaced individuals in urban labor markets in Bangladesh and ease the transition?

Employing a mixed methods approach incorporating literature review, government & NGO reports, stakeholder analysis, the paper assesses both the limitations of structural interventions, such as embankments and the potential of non-structural measures reducing life loss. On the other hand, the paper investigates targeted vocational training programs demonstrating significant potential for enhancing adaptive capacity for the rural-urban transition.