Environmental Law in the Anthropocene: Transnational Dimensions

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Call for Papers

Introduced by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen, the concept of the ‘Anthropocene’ refers to the idea that the Earth has entered a new geological epoch which is characterised by unprecedented human impacts on global natural systems. While the process of formally recognising the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch is still on-going, scientific studies confirm that never before have humans so fundamentally interfered with the natural environment: chemical pollution, land-use change, freshwater use, atmospheric pollution, changes in biochemical cycles and activities resulting in biodiversity loss and ozone depletion are fundamentally affecting natural systems worldwide. Proponents of the concept of the Anthropocene argue that these changes have moved the Earth beyond the stable parameters of the Holocene, the geological epoch that began after the last ice age 12000 years ago and which allowed mankind to flourish. The concept of the Anthropocene, therefore, connotes not just an extension or intensification of existing environmental pressures, but a more fundamental shift towards increased levels of instability, unpredictability and risk.

The concept of the ‘Anthropocene’ destabilises foundational concepts in modern legal thought resulting in novel and innovative ways in which law is used and interpreted to advance environmental agendas. This concept therefore calls on legal scholars to engage with questions of how, and to what extent, law can and should be used to define, structure and regulate interactions between humans and the environment. In addition, there is an urgent need to rigorously engage with normative questions about which values should guide these processes. In this context, transnational environmental law can provide a fruitful approach to engage with new forms of thinking in the context of the Anthropocene: global planetary boundaries, global environmental constitutionalism, and the rights of nature, are to name but a few.

Transnational environmental law has developed in response to new and intensified instances of environmental degradation which cannot be effectively tackled solely by relying on domestic or international law and regulation. Approaching these challenges from a transnational perspective allows environmental law scholarship to move beyond established theoretical paradigms which underpin our understanding of law more generally, and engage with forms of governance that embrace the logics of collaboration and competition, risk and uncertainty, and the blurring of public and private spheres of influence. As such, the aim of
transnational environmental law may be understood to develop ideas of ‘law, regulation and governance’ within, across and beyond the state.

We welcome contributions to this special issue of *Transnational Legal Theory* covering a range of issues, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Theories of transnational environmental law in the Anthropocene, including of a theoretical, normative, methodological, legal practice or policy nature;

- Governance of environmental issues in the Anthropocene, including (amongst others) climate change, waste, water, atmospheric pollution, the oceans, biodiversity and ecosystems;

- Transnational environmental law and questions of participation and justice in the Anthropocene;

- Methods for studying and teaching transnational environmental law in the Anthropocene; and

- The responsibilities and the role of legal scholarship in the Anthropocene, both within and beyond academia.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 30th June 2019. Please submit abstracts of max 250 words with your name and affiliation to Emily.Webster@kcl.ac.uk and Laura.Mai@kcl.ac.uk. The deadline for submission of full papers of 5000 words including footnotes is the 30th November 2019. There is a further possibility of a workshop in October pending financing and interest from participating authors.