

Cultural Legitimacy and the International Law and Policy on Climate Change

21 June 2011

Seminar Report

Introduction

The Surrey International Law Centre hosted an international interdisciplinary seminar on cultural legitimacy and the international law and policy on climate change that took place on 21 June 2011 at the School of Law, University of Surrey.

The seminar sought to contribute to research on the international law and policy of climate change by focusing on the issue of cultural legitimacy. Beginning from the premise that legitimacy critiques of international climate change regulation have the capacity to positively influence policy trends and legal choices, we accepted a range of papers, from across all the disciplines that investigated the link between the efficacy of international legal and policy mechanisms on climate change and cultural legitimacy or local acceptance.

A key aim of the seminar was to bring together interdisciplinary scholars who are exploring the interplay between and amongst law, society, culture and climate change, in order to build a more coherent field of research on the cultural legitimacy of climate change law and policy.



Event themes

The main theme from the seminar was the realisation that climate change poses fundamental and varied challenges to all communities across the globe. The adaptation and mitigation strategies proposed by governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are likely to require radical and fundamental

shifts in socio-political structures, technological and economic systems, organisational forms, and modes of regulation. The sheer volume of law and policy emanating from the international level makes it uncertain which type of regulatory or policy framework is likely to have a positive impact. As a result, climate change is not just an environmental problem requiring technical and regulatory solutions; it is a cultural arena in which a variety of stakeholders – state agencies, firms, industry associations, NGOs, and local communities – engage in contestation as well as collaboration over the form and substance of evolving regimes of governance. The success or failure of proposed measures will depend on their acceptability within the local constituencies within which they are sought to be applied. Therefore there is an urgent need to better comprehend and theorise the role of cultural legitimacy in the choice and effectiveness of international legal and policy interventions aimed at tackling the impact of climate change. Developing scholarship that looks at these elements is an appropriate platform for starting to unravel the links between climate change and cultural legitimacy.



Outcomes

We have two sets of outputs from this seminar. The first is a special edition of the Carbon and Climate Law Review, which comes out at the end of October. The other is an edited book that is planned for the end of December. I am the editor for both outputs and I will ensure that the support of the Institute is acknowledged.

More importantly, a number of participants have decided to join the Environmental Regulatory Research Group within the School of Law, which amplifies the impact that our research will have. We have also invited 4 participants from this seminar to take part in another conference that we are planning in June 2012, which cements the level of collaboration established from the event.

Acknowledgements

In addition to IAS, we also had excellent support from Lexxion Publishers, who carried banners of our conference on their website; sent in copies of their journal to be distributed to seminar participants and provided stationery. The organisers are grateful for the support received from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law (University of Surrey).

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