



Lecture Series *Transformations to Sustainability*



International Environmental Law and the Anthropocene's Energy Dilemma

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Abstract

In this lecture I attempt to reveal the structural complicity of international environmental law (IEL) in causing and exacerbating the Anthropocene's socio-ecological crisis and its attendant energy dilemma. I aim to show how IEL is unable to address this dilemma and to contribute to a full-scale transition to renewable and sustainable energy resource alternatives that respect Earth system integrity and that are accessible to everyone on equal terms. I focus on three specific areas of concern that reveal IEL's entanglement with the rise of Anthropos, its mastery of energy, and the resultant unjust socio-ecological order. These concerns include: IEL's neoliberal anthropocentrism; IEL's entanglement with (neo)colonialism; and IEL's entrenchment of state sovereignty and the sovereign right to exploit energy resources. I conclude with a call for thoroughgoing, and urgent, reforms of IEL.

Louis Kotzé

is Research Professor at the Faculty of Law, North-West University, South Africa where he teaches Environmental Law and Governance. He has been awarded a 2020 Marie Curie Fellowship to become Senior Visiting Professorial Fellow of Earth System Law at the University of Lincoln (UK). His research focuses on the Anthropocene, environmental constitutionalism, human rights, and Earth system law. He has over 140 publications on these themes. Recent books include: *Research Handbook on Human Rights and the Environment* (with A. Grear, 2015); *Global Environmental Constitutionalism in the Anthropocene* (2016); *Environmental Law and Governance for the Anthropocene* (2017); *Sustainable Development Goals: Law, Theory and Implementation* (with D. French, 2018). He is assistant editor of *Earth System Governance*.

The lecture series *Transformations to Sustainability*. Sustainability implies a formidable challenge for a variety of fields. Buzzwords such as bioeconomy, energy transformation, green chemistry, agricultural turnaround or digitalization illustrate the multiple facets at play. Each of these – often deeply interwoven – aspects describe complex processes on their own. Beyond technological progress, transformations to sustainability also require broad societal and institutional change. Against this background, the lecture series *Transformation to Sustainability* reflects on the topic from manifold perspectives: What are the specific targets of transformation processes? How can sustainability targets be translated into viable transformation research programs? To what degree can the transformation processes be consciously managed? What are the main drivers or barriers of transformation and how do they vary in different contexts? The lecture series was initiated by the Thematic Area ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY to offer a comprehensive discussion platform, welcoming colleagues from all disciplines at UFZ. For further information contact the head of RU 6 Environment and Society: bernd.hansjuergens@ufz.de.