

Call for Papers: International Perspectives on Climate Criminal Law

Content Framework

Anthropogenic climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. The transformative power of climate change lies not only in its potentially catastrophic consequences but precisely in the recognition of its human causes. The climate crisis is caused by the human exploitation of natural resources, which is deeply entangled with political, economic and legal foundations.

Accordingly, there is an interrelation between climate change and the legal sphere: 'climate change is in the law', and 'law is in (climate) change'. Law functions not only as a regulatory tool, but also as a constitutive element of the societal power relations that gives rise to the climate crisis. This raises the question of which 'law for (or better: against) climate change' is required. These fundamental analytic inquiries explicitly apply to criminal law. 'Climate Criminal Law' (*Klimastrafrecht*)¹ in this regard proves to be not only a (pre-)dogmatic concept but a key term for addressing the very relationship between the climate crisis and criminal law.² Reflexive research on this relationship requires that one does not work *within* the criminal law paradigm, but on it. In this light, proposals arising from the climate criminal law discourse emerge as contestations of the established criminal law paradigm. Examples include proposals creating new forms of protection that go beyond the typically narrower temporal and spatial boundaries of criminal law (protection of 'the climate'³ or 'future generations'⁴ by criminal law) or easing the principle of accessoriness.⁵

Considering the transnational dimension of the climate crisis, an international approach is obviously necessary to examine the interrelation of the climate crisis and criminal law. Such a transnational scientific exchange has rarely been addressed in recent legal discussion.

With 'International Perspectives on Climate Criminal Law' we intend to open a forum for young international legal scholars to exchange insights on the subject of Climate Criminal Law. Focusing on the very foundations of criminal law, we seek for a comparatively and/ or internationally compatible basis for the concept of Climate Criminal Law. The focus is on Climate Criminal Law in the narrower sense, namely the question about the basis and limits of criminal law on climate protection (*Klimaschutzstrafrecht*) and its theoretical, dogmatic, substantive, and procedural implications. We cordially invite contributions in the following areas, which are neither exhaustive nor conclusive.

1. National legal framework: criminal law and climate protection

In what manner are national legal systems addressing environmental and climate protection? How are international obligations incorporated? Where has progress been made, where does a need for reform remain? Is there a need for specific criminal law provisions to prevent and/or to sanction climate-damaging actions and their consequences? Does the established criminal law paradigm require a foundational transformation of its normative and institutional framework?

¹ Satzger/v. Maltitz, ZStW 133 (2021), 1. Forerunners from the Anglo-American debate include *Byrne*, *Carbon & Climate Law Review* 2010, 278 (283 ff.); *White*, *Climate Change Criminology*, 2020.

² *Burchard/Schmidt*, in: Satzger/v. Maltitz (ed.), *Klimastrafrecht*, 2024, 83 (84 ff.).

³ *Kaiafa-Gbandi*, in: Satzger/v. Maltitz (ed.), *Klimastrafrecht*, Baden-Baden 2024, 41 (43 ff.).

⁴ *Critical Hirsch*, in: Satzger/v. Maltitz (ed.), *Klimastrafrecht*, Baden-Baden 2024, 111 (114 ff.).

⁵ *Satzger*, in: Bondi et. al. (eds.), *Studi in onore di Lucio Monaco*, 2020, 1001 (1014).

2. Legitimation and Limits of Climate Criminal Law

How is criminal law affecting the climate crisis? What function does criminal law have or should have as a regulatory instrument? Are criminal sanctions necessary in addition to ‘sanctions’ and regulations within the domain of commercial law? Can a criminological approach (‘Green Criminology’) contribute to a more profound comprehension of the underlying causes and the ramifications of environmental and climate damage? How can the limitations of (criminal) law in this regard be delineated? These reflections challenge the underlying penal-theoretical assumptions of the criminal legal system: What foundational shifts does this imply? Which socio-legal interactions must be considered? What are the risks and unintended consequences of developing a misconceived climate criminal law?

3. Establishment of an effective Climate Criminal Law

In what manner must the criminal justice system adapt to climate-related changes? Who bears (criminal) liability – political decision makers, corporations, individuals? How can criminal responsibility be consistently attributed? Which forms of sanction are most effective? (How) Can reparation payments and restorative justice make a difference? What role do climate lawsuits and strategic litigation play within the domain of climate criminal law? In what manner can forensic techniques, including satellite data, digital surveillance systems and environmental monitoring be integrated into legal practice to address the intricate causal relationships inherent in cross-border environmental offences? (How) Can such means of protection, sanctioning and prosecution be reconciled with the established criminal law systems and their fundamental legal principles?

4. Jurisdiction in the context of transnational criminal prosecution

What criteria should determine the locus delicti of transnational environmental offences? How can issues of double criminality, multiple climate-damaging causes and their consequences, and intergenerational responsibility be solved in a transnational context? Should international criminal law play a role in promoting climate justice? What structural models (e.g., specialised international tribunals) and universal jurisdictional principles could effectively penalise environmental and climate crimes?

Modalities of application & conference details

Early career researchers (Ph.D. candidates, postdoctoral researchers) and young professionals are cordially invited to submit abstracts (max. 500 words) along with contact and affiliation information and a short CV (also max. 500 words) stating your expertise. All submissions must be written in English and submitted by **15th May 2026** via email to ccl@climateclinic.de. We encourage particularly participants from abroad to apply.

The conference is organized by the Young Penalists of the German National Group of the Association of Penal Law (AIDP) e.V. and the Climate Clinic e.V. and will take place on **15th and 16th October 2026** at the University of Konstanz. The event will be hybrid; participation is possible in person and online.

Participation in the symposium is free of charge. However, the travel expenses may not be covered for all speakers. The conference papers will be published in a proceedings volume.

For questions or further information, please contact us: ccl@climateclinic.de

Organizers: Elisabete Apolinário Oliveira, Janine Blocher, Uma Fritze, João Victor Gianecchini, Hannah Münstermann and Finn-Lauritz Schmidt; **Patrons:** Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bock, Prof. Dr. Liane Wörner, LL.M. (UW-Madison).