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SMU-Sydney-HKU Law & Sustainability Conference Series

Inaugural Call for Papers

“Law in a Hyperconnected World – Joining the Dots for a Sustainable Future”

13-14 July 2023, Yong Pung How School of Law,
Singapore Management University

I. Synopsis

We live in a hyperconnected world. Ecosystems, societies and economies are linked like never before. The unprecedented movement of people, goods and products and the transfer of capital and information characterise not only the present but also the conceivable future. At the same time, our planet faces social-ecological disruption at a scale with no parallels in human history. Critically, this planetary level change has been brought about by human activities.

As societies, economies and the environment are inextricably linked, it makes no sense to think about, let alone regulate, each of these systems in isolation. Recent global reports such as the United Nations’ Environment Program (UNEP)’s Making Peace with Nature – a scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies and the Joint report on biodiversity and climate of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), all highlight that the failure of governance systems to address interconnected global challenges in a holistic manner. The reports also highlight the perverse outcomes that result from the lack of integrated approaches. In ASEAN, Kong &



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Woods (2021) highlight two Southeast Asian megatrends of rapid urbanisation and digital disruption – trends that amplify and accelerate hyperconnectedness. The authors also identify how transnational approaches provide an important means of harnessing the opportunities created by increasingly urban and digitally linked societies.

Singapore is a world leader in urban sustainability and is renowned for its transformations towards a ‘City in Nature’. The four other key pillars of Singapore’s Green Plan 2030 are sustainable living, energy reset, green economy and resilient future. At the same time, the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint (2015) recognises that the complexity of sustainability challenges requires co-operation across sectors, private-public partnerships and collaborative global efforts. This is echoed in the Singapore Management University’s own Sustainability Blueprint which focuses on sustainability research across business operations, finance, urban infrastructure, aging and living well, and food security.

With all of the above in mind, it is critical that new forms of laws and regulation, governance, societal organisation, communication and the transfer of ideas and capital are taken into account when aiming to address sustainability. Laws at the international, transnational and domestic level are, however, currently ill-equipped to address the hyperconnected challenges of today, and do not sufficiently anticipate the emerging risks and opportunities of the future. It is to this gap that this Conference seeks to contribute.

II. Sub-Themes and General Call for Papers

We invite papers that address the Conference theme and that are related (but not restricted to) the following sub-themes: Anticipation, Connections and Resilience. Insights are sought from law and beyond, e.g., trade, investment, finance, insurance, taxation, geopolitics, data and internet regulation. Papers focusing on Asia are particularly welcome. We also invite papers on sustainability education and pedagogy



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Anticipation

This sub-theme focuses on ways in which law can anticipate and address the challenges of unprecedented global environmental change. It welcomes papers from multiple perspectives that engage with:

- Futures approaches, e.g., scenarios, foresight analysis, speculative fiction
- Precautionary approaches
- Psychology, economic and behavioural approaches to law

Connections

This sub-theme seeks to address the often silo-ed nature of existing law. It encourages submissions that deal with integrative concepts and approaches. For example:

- Regime interaction
- Relationship between national and international law
- Systems approaches
- Sustainability mainstreaming and integration across sectors
- Transnational regulation

Resilience

This sub-theme invites papers that draw together the ‘Anticipation’ and ‘Connections’ sub-themes above to identify transformative legal pathways and procedural mechanisms towards resilient interconnected communities, environments and economies. Papers may address topics such as:

- Leverage points and trade-offs
- Decolonisation
- Political economy
- Public participation
- Extending legal personhood (e.g. the rights and obligations of future generations and the more-than-human)
- Dispute prevention and dispute settlement
- Value change



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Abstracts of no more than 250 words should be emailed to lawandsustainability@smu.edu.sg by **15 MARCH 2023**. All abstracts will be peer-reviewed. Selected speakers will be notified by **31 MARCH 2023**. It is anticipated that a special issue from the Conference will be published by a prominent journal in the field.

The 2023 Law & Sustainability Conference will be held at SMU Yong Pung How School of Law in the heart of Singapore as a hybrid event (in person + zoom). There is no registration fee for selected speakers, though we are unfortunately unable to cover travel-related expenses. Travel allowance may be provided for early career speakers (within three years after PhD completion).

III. SMU Organising Committee

- Associate Professor Nengye LIU
- Associate Professor Michelle Lim
- Assistant Professor Stefanie Schacherer

IV. Co-Organisers

- Centre for Commercial Law in Asia, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University
- Australian Centre for Climate and Environmental Law, Sydney Law School, University of Sydney
- Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong