



New Perspectives: Rights of Nature Biographies and Abstracts

Friday 11 June 2021

Dr Emily Jones is a Lecturer in the School of Law and Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex. Dr Jones is a generalist public international lawyer whose interdisciplinary work combines theory and practice. Her work cuts across: gender and international law; international environmental law; the law of the sea; science, technology and international law; posthuman legal theory; gender and conflict; and political economy, imperialism and international law. Within these areas her current work focuses on the rights of nature, military technologies (including autonomous weapons systems and human enhancement technologies) and the regulation of deep-sea mining.

Dr Iván Darío Vargas Roncancio has a Ph.D in Natural Resource Sciences (McGill University, 2021), Leadership for the Ecozoic fellow, and associate editor for Challenges in Sustainability. He is a lawyer with master's degrees in Bioscience and Law (National University of Colombia, 2012) and Latin American Studies (Duke University, 2016); Junior Specialist (University of California-Davis/CPPR, 2011-2013) and institutional ethnographer (Everyday Peace Indicators project, George Mason University/Manchester University, 2017-18). A COLCIENCIAS scholar (Colombia, 2013) and a FLAS fellow (Foreign Language and Area Studies-PUC São Paulo, 2016). His research ethnographically follows Indigenous practitioners, scientists, legal scholars, and ritual plants across territories, documents, and courts of justice to contribute to a larger paradigm shift: from reductionist environmental law and governance models to ecological, systems-based, and other-than-human jurisprudence in post-conflict Colombia. His interests include Earth law, Indigenous law and cosmologies, ethnography, Andes-Amazon. More information: <https://www.l4ecozoic.org/iv%C3%A1n-vargas-roncancio>

Abstract:

Recent norms and judicial decisions on the rights of nature place life at the center of legal discourse in Latin America. This intervention will cover two assumptions: that the law is a system of norms made by humans to regulate human conduct in relation to an externally existing natural world; and that the form of law is primarily linguistic and propositional, that is, only human. Based on ethnographic encounters in Amazonia I ask in what sense, then, does conjuring other-than-human beings as agents of legal meaning, rather than mere recipients of state-sanctioned rights, transform what we mean by law and rights of nature in Latin America?

Dr Harriet Harden-Davies is Ocean Nexus postdoctoral research fellow at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security, University of Wollongong. Harriet's research interests span ocean science, stewardship and sustainability - the development of a new United Nations treaty for marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is a key focus of her research and policy engagement work. She is Guest Investigator at the Marine Policy Centre of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, co-lead of the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative, and member of the UNESCO-IOC Group of Experts on Capacity Development and UNESCO-IOC Informal Working Group of Early Career Ocean Professionals. Her previous roles include Visiting Science Diplomacy Fellow at Tufts University, Consultant to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and Manager of Policy and Projects at the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. She has a PhD in ocean law and policy from University of Wollongong, Australia, and a BSc(Hons) in marine biology and oceanography from the University of Southampton, UK. Harriet is a keen scuba diver, sailor and surfer.

Dr Craig Kaufmann is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Oregon where he specializes in environmental politics, ecological law, and sustainable development. He is the author of two books, most recently *The Politics of Rights of Nature: Strategies for Building a More Sustainable Future* (MIT Press 2021), and numerous articles on environmental politics. Kauffman is also an active member of the United Nations Knowledge Network on Harmony with Nature and a founding member of the Academic Hub of the Global Alliance on the Rights of Nature. His research has been supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Inter-American Foundation, the Rotary Foundation, Sony Corporation, the University of Oregon, and the Latin American School of Social Sciences-Ecuador (FLACSO-Ecuador).

Abstract:

With the onset of climate change and the closing window of opportunity to take meaningful action, a growing chorus of actors is calling for rights of nature to be recognized in law and used as a tool for forcing a more ecologically sustainable approach to development. By 2021, at least 180 such rights of nature laws existed in 18 countries around the world. Because rights of nature law is emerging through different pathways under distinct domestic conditions, it is constructed differently in various places. Dr. Kaufmann will discuss key differences among rights of nature laws, in particular the implications of recognizing ecosystems as possessing unique rights versus granting ecosystems legal personhood, which confers the same rights and liabilities held by humans and corporations. He will also discuss how rights of nature impacts conventional understandings of sustainable development.