



PATRICK TOUSSAINT:
 “CCLR IS THE FIRST PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL
 TO FOCUS SPECIFICALLY ON CLIMATE LAW AND,
 IF I MAY SAY SO, HAS BEEN DOING A TERRIFIC
 JOB OVER THE PAST 14 YEARS”

We would like to officially welcome Patrick, our new Managing Editor of CCLR who has taken up this position since April 2020.

Patrick is a Research Associate at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) Potsdam based in Germany and is completing a PhD in international climate change law at the University of Eastern Finland.

Patrick – why don’t you tell us a bit about yourself?

Thank you for the kind introduction. In a nutshell, I have been working on climate and environmental policy issues since graduating from my LL.M. ten years ago. Back then we had the disappointing climate summit in Copenhagen which was truly a wake-up call for me about the urgency of the climate crisis that we face and the lack of political will there is to address it. I remember the magic number of 350ppm CO2 equivalent – that was the threshold we were not supposed to pass in order to stabilize greenhouse gases at a ‘safe’ level. Today we consistently average over 400ppm CO2 eq. While these numbers may mean little to those less familiar with the science, to me whose hopes like those of many others were frustrated in Copenhagen, they had an almost magical meaning – as if the world was going to break the moment we exceeded this limit. With this in mind I pursued further studies in diplomacy and environmental science, trying to get a better understanding of the issues at stake beyond the monochrome perspective my law studies could offer. Over the years I also had the opportunity to work on environmental issues beyond climate change, working for NGOs, the UN, a development agency and a research institution. I think it was really through this exposure to so many different settings and perspectives that I came to understand the complexity of the issue of climate change and the need for solutions across different levels of governance and across time.

What is the topic of your current research?

It was thanks to this multidisciplinary interest that I ended up working with the IASS for the past five years. I worked on several projects, for example on the linkages between air pollution and climate change, and the complementarity of hard and soft governance frameworks such as the international treaties governing air pollution and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). After the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, I got involved in a research project that sought to highlight the barriers and drivers for the implementation of the new climate treaty, with case studies in Germany, Canada and Brazil. Finally, I had the opportunity to further develop my own ideas about climate justice through a PhD with the University of Eastern Finland’s Center for Climate Change, Energy and Environmental Law, hosted and supported through IASS, where I looked critically at the controversial issue of how the international community deals with the destructive consequences of climate change on people and their livelihoods. This issue which is commonly referred to as ‘loss and damage’ in climate policy circles immediately sparked my attention, due to the politics involved, the injustice towards climate victims both substantially and procedurally, and the increasing urgency with which we have to find solutions to it, given the current level of global climate ambition. In my PhD research I analysed how those most affected by loss and damage have limited opportunity to participate and influence the multilateral decision-making process, the importance of a human rights-based approach, the role of climate litigation, and how the continued denial of responsibility shapes the multilateral law and policy response to date.

What motivated you to take up this job?

I joined CCLR with the clear mission to do two things: First, to enhance the quality and outreach of the journal by ramping up the quality of contributions, peer review process and by exploring new ways to showcase our research articles. Secondly, to determine the new strategic direction of CCLR in close coordination with our publisher Lexxion. CCLR is the first peer-reviewed journal to focus specifically on climate law and, if I may say so, has been doing a terrific job over the past 14 years under the lead of Prof. Michael Mehling to generate outstanding academic and practice-relevant scholarship on a breadth of topics related to climate and energy policy and regulation.

What has your experience been with the journal since starting in April?

Since I started in April I was impressed with the talented and dedicated team at Lexxion, especially the enormous contribution of our Executive Editor Jakob McKernan. They have been so great to work with which has allowed me to implement some exciting and creative ideas pretty much from the start. For example, when our issue 1/2020 came out we organised an Authors’ Webinar on climate litigation that gave each of the contributors the chance to discuss their work and for the readers to put a face to it and ask questions. We received a lot of positive feedback on this experimental format, and will continue to refine it for future thematic issues. Similarly, in issue 2/2020 – the first I had the pleasure to lead – we introduced a new segment called the Practitioners’ Perspective. I felt that aside from the more academic content, we have a huge network of climate law practitioners, in law firms, NGOs, public administrations, worldwide and it would be a shame not to tap into this potential to hear directly from these practitioners about recent and ongoing legal developments they are involved in – bills, court cases, negotiations, to name a few examples. We are always interested in your contributions!

How do you see the future direction of CCLR?

This is work in progress. I am using this year to get a feel for how our journal operates, to learn where there is room for improvement, what segments work and which don’t. The future strategic direction is something we are continuously working toward as we approach the 15th anniversary of CCLR next year. We have also launched a survey among our Editorial Board and key climate law scholars and practitioners to canvass their feedback and ideas on the journal – you can still contribute to our short survey here: <http://shorturl.at/dmCU2> . I look forward to your responses.

