

BERGEN EXCHANGES

ON LAW & SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

#BeEx2025 18—22 AUGUST



AUTOCRATIZATION * DYNAMICS * INDIGENOUS RIGHTS & LAND
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS * CLIMATE CHANGE * ACADEMIC FREEDOM
FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW * GENDER & POLITICS
DECOLONIZING ACADEMIA * JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE * REPRODUCTIVE
JUSTICE * ART AS RESISTANCE & TRANSFORMATION * CRIMINAL LAW &
MENTAL HEALTH * LEARNING EXCHANGES * DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE

PROGRAM

Venues:

KULTURHUSET, VASKERELVEN 8, BERGEN (Monday - Wednesday)

BERGEN GLOBAL, JEKTEVIKSBAKKEN 31 (Thursday, Friday)

The Bergen Exchanges on Law & Social Transformation — #BeEx2025

is a meeting place for scholars and practitioners from across disciplines and world regions who seek to understand how law is used as an instrument of change, and how it shapes and is shaped by power relations. It is a week of public discussions where we scrutinize strategic uses of rights and law and how legal institutions function as arenas for political contestation (*lawfare*). The multi-disciplinary and international nature of the Bergen Exchanges makes it a unique space to learn, and to improve research strategies and methods to grasp the dynamics and effects of law and lawfare: from governments' use of law to shape societies—through constitutional change, international treaties, statutes, or regulations—to social actors litigating in court or otherwise engaging rights and law to advance their goals. Effects of legal strategies can take many forms: it can change laws, policies, and the distribution of resources, but also alter political dynamics, ideas and discourses, which may be as important for long term transformation. We also seek to better understand the functioning of legal and administrative institutions as they adjudicate, interpret, and implement legal norms.

LawTransform (CMI-UiB Centre on Law & Social Transformation) has hosted the Bergen Exchanges every year since 2014. **LawTransform** is a global community and collaborative network for research and education on law and social change. The Centre is co-owned by the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) and the University of Bergen (UiB), faculties of Law and Social Sciences and is based at the UiB Department of Government. Co-directors this year have been Siri Gloppen (UiB), Lise Rakner (UiB) and Liv Tønnessen (CMI). Lara Côrtes is the LawTransform Coordinator.

The PhD course 'Effects of Lawfare: Courts and law as battlegrounds for social change' is an integrated part of the Bergen Exchanges. The course is interdisciplinary open to students from across the globe. It is a hybrid course, with the option of being present in Bergen during the week of #BeEx2025. 35 Students were accepted this year, and the majority will join us in Bergen!

#BeEx2025 events are public, and participation is free of charge. Most sessions are recorded and streamed online. If you do not want to be present in photos published from the events, please let the registration desk know. If you require adjustments or equipment to participate on an equal basis with others, please let us know in advance at info@lawtransform.no.

#BeEx2025 is made possible by contributions from the research projects that form part of LawTransform, and whose research is presented throughout the Exchanges, as well as through collaboration with our partners: **Bergen Global**; **DIPA**—Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism; **CET**—Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation; **SkeivForsk**—the UiB interfaculty queer research network; **SKOK**—Centre for Women's and Gender Research; the **Rafto** Foundation for Human Rights; **BCEPS**—Bergen Centre for Ethics and Priority Setting; and **GRIP**—Global Research Program on Inequality. We are also grateful for financial and in-kind support from the **Bergen Municipality**, and the **Norwegian Research Council**. And not least: thanks to the contributions from our dedicated LawTransform interns, volunteers and fellows!

MONDAY AUGUST 18TH 2025

DEMOCRACY, AUTOCRATIZATION, RESISTANCE

VENUE: **KULTURHUSET**, VASKERELVEN 8, TOP FLOOR
The venue is open from 8:30 for coffee, tea, meet & greet.

9:00 - 9:30

OPENING of the 2025 Bergen Exchanges

9:30 - 11:00

OPENING KEYNOTES

Autocratization Dynamics and Legalized Politics of Resistance: Global Perspectives

Around the world, democratic institutions are being eroded. Elected leaders expand executive power and restrict civic space, often under the guise of law and order. This opening session of the 2025 Bergen Exchanges explores the dynamics driving these shifts—including the role of digital authoritarianism, and of various legal strategies, punitive discourse and tough-on-crime narratives in closing off legislative space for rights-based reforms, emboldening authoritarian policing, and triggering backlash against progressive judicial decisions. Drawing on comparative insights and recent research, the session asks: How do repressive narratives gain legitimacy? What role does law play in advancing authoritarianism - and in strategies of resistance? This session is part of the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics: Innovations in Research-Embedded Learning**, funded by the Norwegian Research Council (NRC Intpart #322644) and the CMI/LawTransform project **RightAct: Rights Activism under Political Uncertainty** (NRC Fripro #325997)

Moderator **Siri Gloppen** (University of Bergen)

Speakers: **Danielle Rached** (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil)

Georgiana Pascu (Centre for Legal Resources, Romania)

Namita Wahi (Centre for Policy Research, India)

Rachel Cichowski (University of Washington, USA)

Satang Nabaneh (University of Dayton, USA / The Gambia)

11:15 - 12:00

In contexts of autocratization and geopolitical realignment, the space for rights-based activism is narrowing—politically, financially, and discursively. Regimes deploy increasingly sophisticated tools to suppress dissent, while international support for human rights and democracy is declining. This session centers on how activists respond: What strategies emerge when traditional channels close? How do movements adapt when external solidarity wanes, funding contracts, and repression intensifies? Grounded in African experiences but with global relevance, this session analyzes activist strategies under constraint—from legal mobilization and cultural resistance to digital innovation and transnational reconfiguration. Drawing on theories of political opportunity, civic agency, and institutional power, we ask how resistance is sustained in difficult times—and what these strategies reveal about the future of human rights activism in a less supportive international order. This session is part of the CMI/LawTransform project **RightAct: Rights Activism under Political Uncertainty** (NRC Fripro #325997)

Moderator: **Matthew Gichohi** (CMI)

Panel: **Ayo Sogunro**, **Reem Abbas** (digital participation), **Adrian Jjuuko** (Makerere University)

12:15 - 13:00

ROUNDTABLE

Rethinking Peace

As Europe deepens military collaborations and expands defense investments, critical questions about the meaning of peace, the role of academia, and the shrinking space for dissent are increasingly absent from public debate. This roundtable asks: *Who defines peace, and in whose name is security pursued?* We explore the fading visibility of the peace movement, the moral and political responsibilities of researchers and institutions, and the need for strategic, alternative visions of peace in a time of re-militarization. What does it mean to “not obey in advance”? How can we reclaim space for debate, imagination, and refusal in the face of growing securitization? This session is a collaboration with the CRITPEACE (Critical Thinking on Peace) project at the University of Oslo (UiO) and **Autocratization Dynamics** (RCN Intpart #322644).

Moderator; **Oumar Ba** (Cornell University)

Introduction by **Kristin Bergtora Sandvik** (University of Oslo and PRIO)

13:15 - 14:00

KEYNOTE & ROUNDTABLE

High Courts in our Midst: A Political Theory of Institutional Strength

KEYNOTE: **Dan Brinks** (University of Texas - digital participation):

As courts play an increasingly central role in contemporary political struggles—both as targets of autocratizing regimes and as arenas for rights-based resistance and broader struggles for social justice—a central question is: Can the judiciary withstand the pressure—can the centre hold?. Understanding what makes high courts strong has never been more urgent. This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics** (RCN Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Tania Groppi** (University of Siena)

Panel: **Alice Timken** (Syracuse University); **Juliana Pontes** (Universidade de São Paulo); and **Tom Keck** (Syracuse University)

14:00 - 15:00

LUNCH

CHECK OUT THE **PHD STUDENTS' POSTERS** & YOUR **COLLEAGUES' PUBLICATIONS**

Monday 18 August 15:00 - 17:15

The 2025 Annual Lecture on Law & Social Transformation

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Southern Sámi joik by **Sondre Nārva Pettersen**

Payam Akhavan

“The Future of International Human Rights Law”



Photo: Pluralism123, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

The authority of international law is being tested as global institutions confront escalating conflicts and allegations of mass atrocity crimes amidst an unprecedented retreat from multilateralism. This lecture examines the potential and limits of human rights norms and institutions in today's fragmented geopolitical landscape, with a focus on the conflicts in the Middle East. The lecture explores how international courts are navigating claims of genocide and violations of humanitarian law under intense political pressure and the implications of these developments on regional transformation, alongside other major global crises. What does this mean for the future of accountability and the global legal order?

Payam Akhavan is the Massey in Human Rights and Senior Fellow at Massey College, University of Toronto and Associate Member of the Institut de droit international. A leading scholar and practitioner in international law and human rights, he has published widely and is the author of *In Search of a Better World: A Human Rights Odyssey*—a Canadian bestseller and the subject of a CBC documentary. Professor Akhavan has served as Legal Advisor to the UN international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Special Advisor on Genocide to the ICC Prosecutor, and a Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. He has investigated atrocities in conflict zones worldwide and represented survivors of genocide, including the Yazidis of Iraq, the Rohingya of Myanmar, and the Bahá'ís of his native country Iran. He has appeared in notable cases before major international and national courts, including the ICJ, ICC, ECtHR, IACtHR, and the Supreme Courts of Canada and the U.S. This session is a collaboration with the **Rafto Foundation for Human Rights** and the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

ROUNDTABLE & PLENARY DISCUSSION

Moderator: **Dorothee Alberts** (HSU/Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg)

Panel: **Kristin Bergtora Sandvik** (UiO/PRIO); **Marthe Sleire Engedahl** (University of Bergen); **Munzoul Assal** (CMI); **Nina Reiners** (University of Oslo); **Oumar Ba** (Cornell University)

18:00 - 19:00

THE BERGEN MAYOR'S RECEPTION

(SCHØTSTUENE, BRYGGEN - by invitation)

We will walk jointly to the reception from the conference venue after the last session.

19:30 - 21:00

EXHIBITION & TALK

Art as resistance & transformation

Venue: **Vågsallmenningen 12**

!KUNSTHALL 3:14

10 Volumes: Fragments of a Shared Landscape

Pablo Bordon, Reinaldo Cid, Khadis De La Rosa Olyo,
Adonis Flores, Osmel Herrera Lopez, Duniesky Martin,
Clara Massó, Marianela Orozco, Levi Orta, Linet Sanchez

22.8.–9.11.2025

Art can confront power, nurture dissent, and imagine alternative futures—especially in contexts marked by repression, scarcity, and censorship. We will visit a (not yet opened) exhibition at Kunsthall 3:14 - **Ten Volumes: Fragments of a Shared Landscape** - featuring ten contemporary Cuban artists. Through visual and performative practices, artists challenge dominant narratives, evoke collective memory, and open space for political and emotional renewal. A conversation with one of the artists - **Levi Orta** - will explore the role of artistic expression as a mode of resistance and transformation. The session invites reflection on how art shapes and sustains resistance, within Cuba and in other constrained contexts around the world. This session is a collaboration with **Kunsthall 3:14**

Moderator: **Siri Gloppen** (University of Bergen, UiB)

Panelists: **Håkon Tveit** (Bergen International Film Festival / Cine Latino / UiB)

Levi Orta (Visual artist); **Varun Gauri** (Novelist); and **Sondre Nærva Pettersen** (Musician)

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TUESDAY AUGUST 19th

AUTOCRATIZATION, GENDER DYNAMICS, HEALTH

VENUE: KULTURHUSET, VASKERELVEN 8, TOP FLOOR

The venue is open from 8:30 for coffee, tea, meet & greet.

9:00 - 9:45

Autocracies as International Lawmakers

ROUNDTABLE

As autocratic regimes grow in power and influence, they are no longer just resisting international norms—they are actively shaping them. This session explores how authoritarian states engage in the making of international law and institutions: promoting sovereignty-based interpretations of human rights, reshaping multilateral forums, and exporting legal and normative models that challenge liberal-democratic principles. Bringing together legal, political, and geopolitical perspectives, the session asks: How do autocracies shape global governance? What are the implications for accountability, rights, and the future of international law? This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics: Innovations in Research-Embedded Learning**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Sanne Taekema** (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Introduction: **Nina Reiners** (University of Oslo),

Panel: **Neil Datta** (European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, EFP);

Tania Groppi (University of Siena); **Eirik Holmøyvik** (University of Bergen)

10:00 - 11:00

KEYNOTE & ROUNDTABLE

Gender lawfare in Legal and Digital Arenas

KEYNOTE by **Svati Shah** (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

Anti-gender movements are gaining traction globally—mobilizing against gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive justice, and the broader human rights framework. Rooted in authoritarian, religious, and nationalist ideologies, these movements are digitally sophisticated and strategically transnational. Social media platforms serve as key arenas for narrative control, disinformation, and identity formation—particularly among young men—while also shaping legal discourse and amplifying backlash. This session explores *gender lawfare*: the strategic deployment of legal and discursive tools—both online and offline—to enforce or resist gender norms. We examine how anti-gender actors use rights language, moral framings, and legal claims to legitimize repression, and how law and digital technologies intertwine in contemporary struggles over gender justice. What makes anti-gender strategies so politically effective? How are legal categories weaponized or reclaimed in both courtrooms and digital spaces? And how can scholars and activists push back against this converging legal and cultural backlash? This session is part of the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics: (NRC Intpart #322644)** and is organized in collaboration with **SKOK** Centre for Women and Gender Studies and **SkeivForsk**, the UiB cross faculty group for queer research.

Moderator: **Kari Jegerstedt** (SKOK)

Panel: **Adrian Jjuuko** (Makerere University); **Fatma Timucin** (Syracuse University);

Livia Buzolin (Fundação Getulio Vargas, FGV); and **Virginia Lemme** University of Siena)

11:15 - 12:15

ROUNDTABLE

Decolonizing Gender - Women in Decolonial Debate

This session explores how African women engage and reshape the concept of gender within decolonial frameworks. It examines how feminist thought and practice navigate the entanglements of colonial legacies, patriarchal structures, and global rights discourses. What does it mean to speak of gender justice in societies marked by historical and ongoing forms of imperial domination? How are women asserting agency and reframing feminist struggles in ways that are locally rooted yet globally resonant? Through theoretical reflection and grounded analysis, the session interrogates the politics of voice, visibility, and resistance—and asks how African women are contributing to the global project of decolonizing knowledge, institutions, and gender itself. This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen GOV project **Decolonizing Epistemologies: Disciplines and the University in Relation to the Society and the World** (Norhed)

Moderator: **Lise Rakner** (University of Bergen)

Panel: **Florence Ebila**, (Makerere Institute of Social Research, MISR); **Lyn Ossome** (MISR); **Mbasughun Ukpi** (MISR); **Andrea Felde** (UiB).

12:30 - 13:30

ROUNDTABLE

Truth Commissions and Sexual Violence

Truth commissions have become central mechanisms for addressing past atrocities and fostering societal healing—but their ability to meaningfully engage with sexual and gender-based violence remains uneven and contested. This session examines how truth commissions have addressed (or failed to address) sexual violence in diverse contexts, and the implications this holds for justice, memory, and institutional reform. Drawing on feminist critiques of transitional justice, the session explores questions of voice, representation, and re-traumatization, as well as the structural silences and hierarchies that shape which harms are acknowledged and how. What models exist for centering gendered experiences of violence? And what lessons can be drawn for future truth-seeking efforts that seek to take sexual violence seriously—not only as a personal violation but as a political and historical crime? And how can we as researchers create synergies with practical policy work in this field?

This session is part of the CMI/LawTransform project **Truth Commissions and Sexual Violence: African and Latin American Experiences** (NRC)

Moderator: **Ana Braconnier** (LawTransform/URL)

Panel **Elin Skaar** (CMI); **Lesego Sekhu** (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation); **Pilar Domingo**

13:30 - 14:30

LUNCH

14:30 – 15:15

ROUNDTABLE

Speaking Out Against Genocide and Repression

This roundtable marks the publication of **Public Anthropologist's** special issue “Speaking out against genocide and repression”, calling for intellectual and moral clarity in the face of the unfolding genocide in Palestine. It explores how repression, silencing, and claims of neutrality—particularly within academic institutions in the Global North—have revealed deep complicity and moral ambiguity within the discipline of anthropology. As the space for dissent shrinks, the issue poses a pressing challenge: How can anthropologists confront power and uphold justice in a time when epistemic freedom, academic integrity, and the very right to life are under assault?

This session is a collaboration with **Public Anthropologist**

Moderator: **Rachel Sieder** (CIESAS/CMI)

Panel: **Antonio de Lauri** (CMI) **Heidi Mogstad** (CMI) and **Carmeliza Rosario** (UiB)

15:30 – 17:00

INTERVIEW & ROUNDTABLE

Linda Grøning in conversation with **Stephen Mathis**

Criminal Responsibility and Mental Disorders:

Advancing a New Theoretical (COMPLEX) Framework

What role do our understandings of mental disorder play in the concept of criminal insanity—and in our broader concept of criminal responsibility? This session presents an ambitious new ERC-funded research project aiming to develop a new theoretical framework for asking these questions. Combining cross-country empirical studies of current legal doctrines with interdisciplinary analysis of how the normative and factual legal premises about mental disorders involved in these doctrines relate to philosophy and mind sciences, The COMPLEX project seeks to clarify the relevance of mental disorder within the criminal law. In particular, the current lack of clarity about the relevance of mental disorders raises concerns about the rule of law, unequal treatment, and criminal justice. This project has the potential to challenge current paradigms and to have major implications for science and society.

This session is in collaboration with the UiB Law School and the **COMPLEX** project (European Research Council grant #101171893).

ROUNDTABLE

Cultural and Medical Differences in Treating Criminally Unaccountable Offenders

There are wide cultural, legal, and medical differences in the treatment and reintegration of offenders deemed criminally unaccountable. In this panel featuring scholars and practitioners from Colombia, Bulgaria, Norway and Japan, we will investigate how countries with very different legal and medical systems handle and treat offenders deemed unaccountable due to mental disorder. Along the way, we will explore cultural and religious influences on countries' efforts to treat and reintegrate these offenders after they have committed crimes and have been deemed legally unaccountable.

This session is in collaboration with University of Bergen Law and the project 'Exploring the Insanity Defense in the Global South)

Moderator: **Stephen Mathis** (University of Bergen)

Panel: Prof. **Slavka Dimitrova** (Burgas Free University, Bulgaria), Prof. **Miki Hirano** (Kagawa University, Japan), Prof. **Linda Grøning** (University of Bergen); Dr. **Sergio Molina** (Clinica San Juan de Dios, Colombia, joining virtually)

17:15 – 18:15

ROUNDTABLE

Mindful Justice – Dignity, Care & Police Accountability

This session explores how policing practices can be reoriented around dignity, empathy, and care. Drawing on the *Mindful Justice* project—a comparative study of Norway and Romania—we examine how more humane, rights-respecting approaches to detention and police encounters can reduce harm and strengthen public trust. How can police interactions uphold the dignity of detainees, particularly those with mental health needs? How can the police better investigate trafficking victims with mental disabilities? What institutional and legal reforms are needed to align policing with human rights standards? And how can accountability mechanisms ensure both safety and respect in custodial settings? This session is in collaboration with CLR and the **Mindful Justice** project funded by the Romania Fund for Bilateral Relations, EEA and Norway Grants.

Moderators: **Abeer Ahmed** (LawTransform) and **Camila Salazar** (University of Bergen)

Introduction; **Georgiana Pascu** (Centre for Legal Resources, Romania)

Panel; **Kari Øverland** (University of Bergen); **Lauren Dawson** (University of Washington),

Julia Goldani (Fundação Getulio Vargas, FGV)

19:00 - 22:30

SOCIAL EVENT - Christiesgate 18

by invitation

We will walk jointly to the social event from the conference venue

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WEDNESDAY AUGUST 20th

VENUE: KULTURHUSET, VASKERELVEN 8, TOP FLOOR

The venue is open from 8:30 for coffee, tea, meet & greet.

9:00 – 10:00

ROUNDTABLE

Speaking the Law – How Language Shapes Legal Power and Meaning

Law is not only made in courts and legislatures—it is shaped through language. This session explores how the words we use to talk about law and legal mobilization influence how legal authority is constructed, contested, and understood. Drawing on insights from socio-legal studies and comparative constitutional law, we ask: How do legal concepts change as they cross borders and languages? What power dynamics are embedded in legal translation? How does language shape who gets to speak—and be heard—in legal debates? And do words matter for how we as researchers analyze legal contestation? This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Tom Keck** (Syracuse University)

Panel: **Gökan Sen** (University of Oslo); **Jeff Handmaker** (Erasmus University Rotterdam); **Tevfik Can Peker** (Kadir Has University)

10:15 – 11:00

ROUNDTABLE

Contrasts, Conflicts and Collaborations from Islamic Law to Financial Regulations: How Muslim Entrepreneurs Navigate Legal Requirements in Norway

Drawing from key insights gained in the Research-Council Funded project “The Invisible Ceiling,” this roundtable explores the contrasts, conflicts, and collaborations that exist between Islamic Law (shari’ah) and Norwegian financial regulations for Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs. Time and again, Muslim immigrant entrepreneurs in Norway navigate these legal structures through a range of practices from rethinking their interpretations of Islamic law, to elaborating the lesser-known possibilities for financing. The roundtable explores this range and concludes by comparing with cases in other countries and reflecting on future possibilities.

Moderator: **Alija Avdukic** (University of Dundee)

Panel: **Sarah A. Tobin** (CMI); **Mehmet Asutay** (University of Durham); **Mari Norbakk** (CMI)

11:15 – 12:30

BOOK LAUNCH & ROUNDTABLE

Reproductive Justice

The struggle over abortion rights is intensifying across the globe. From landmark victories in Ireland, Colombia, and India to growing restrictions in the United States, Romania, and beyond, legal mobilization has become a central arena in the fight for—and against—reproductive justice. This event explores how activists, lawyers, and policymakers engage courts and legislatures to shape abortion law, and how transnational movements—both progressive and conservative—are influencing national trajectories. In a moment of democratic uncertainty and politicized legal systems, what strategies are proving effective? And how can law be mobilized to advance reproductive freedom and justice? This session serves as the launch of two books: Mindy Roseman and Rachel Rebouche (eds) **Accessing Abortion: Global and Comparative Perspectives** (NYU Press 2025) and Satang Nabaneh and Ebenezer Durojaye (eds) **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa** (Emerald Publishing 2025)

Moderator: **Carolina Mosquera Vera** (University of Warsaw)

Introductions: **Mindy J. Roseman** (Yale University); **Satang Nabaneh** (University of Dayton)
Panel: **Carmeliza Rosario**; **Irene Maffi** (University of Lausanne); **Karolina Kocemba** (Erasmus University Rotterdam); **Neil Datta** (European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, EFP)

12:30 - 14:00

LUNCH

Poster session with PhD students



14:00 - 15:30

Department of Government GENERAL SEMINAR

KEYNOTE by **Tom Keck**

Freedom of speech & Democratic Backsliding

Free speech is essential to democratic governance, but it can also be abused in ways that undermine democratic governance. Indeed, during the current era of democratic backsliding, autocratization has been associated with both increasing state censorship and increasingly untrammelled hate speech and disinformation. This talk will survey the range of judicial responses to a variety of democracy-relevant speech conflicts across multiple jurisdictions, with particular attention to the Trump-era United States.

ROUNDTABLE: **Academic Freedom and Obligation in Dark Times**

Academic freedom is increasingly under siege—challenged not only by censorship, surveillance, and repression, but also by the political economy of knowledge production. As funding structures grow more precarious and politicized, and universities become entangled in market logics and donor influence, the space for critical scholarship narrows. In times of war, authoritarianism, and democratic decline, the role of scholars becomes ever more urgent. This seminar explores the threats to academic freedom today, including what some have termed *epistemic violence*, and the ethical and political obligations of intellectuals working within systems shaped by both repression and financial constraint. What does it mean to think and speak freely—and responsibly—when both truth and funding are contested? The lecture and roundtable are a collaboration between the University of Bergen, **Department of Government General Seminar** series and the **Autocratization Dynamics**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Elisabeth Ivarsflaten** (University of Bergen)

Panel: **Tom Keck** (Syracuse University); **Anwasha Dutta** (CMI);

Malcolm Langford (University of Oslo)

15:45 - 16:45

ROUNDTABLE

Judicial independence and judicial reform

Judicial reform can be a path to strengthening rule of law and judicial independence—or a vehicle for political capture. This session examines the paradox of judicial reform in an age of democratic backsliding: how efforts to restructure courts, revise appointment processes, or "modernize" legal institutions may undermine judicial independence rather than protect it. While often framed as promoting transparency and accountability, reforms such as the popular election of judges—as recently introduced in Mexico—also raise critical questions about politicization, populist pressure, and the erosion of institutional safeguards. Bringing together theoretical perspectives on courts, power, and institutional resilience, the session focuses on. What do these changes signal about shifting executive-judicial relations? How do they reflect broader global trends? And what strategies—legal, political, or civic—exist to balance independence with accountability and safeguard the democratic role of the judiciary under pressures. This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics: Innovations in Research-Embedded Learning**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Tania Groppi** (University of Siena)

Panel: **Andrea Castagnola** (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella), **Namita Wahi** (Centre for Policy Research, India); **Victor Hsu** (University of Texas Austin); **Luciana Gross Cunha** (FGV)

17:00 - 18:30

LawTransform Advisory Board meeting

19:00 - 22:30

ANNUAL LAWTRANSFORM PARTY AT THE University of Bergen LAW SCHOOL CAFETERIA

(MAGNUS LAGABØTESPLASS 1 - by invitation)

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THURSDAY AUGUST 21st

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS, LAND, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

(VENUE: BERGEN GLOBAL, JEKTEVIKSBAKKEN 31)

9:00 - 9:45

LEARNING EXCHANGES

Decolonising Classrooms

Join us for the launch of *A Global Classroom for Global Challenges*—an ambitious international teaching collaboration addressing how we can decolonize and democratize education on global governance. The project brings together the University of São Paulo (USP), Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), the University of Washington (UW), the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and the University of Bergen (UiB) in a four-year partnership. We aim to develop a shared curriculum for two new courses, one on climate governance and the other on migration and citizenship. Together, we ask: How can we build classrooms that reflect diverse lived experiences across race, class, gender, and geography? How do we create shared learning spaces that challenge dominant epistemologies and foster mutual understanding across campuses and continents? Through joint courses, collaborative online international learning (COIL), staff and student exchanges, and curriculum co-creation, the project seeks to transform how we teach—and learn—about the governance of global challenges.

This session is a collaboration with the University of Bergen GOV project “A Global Classroom for Global challenges” (HK-Dir UTForsk)

Moderator: **Lise Rakner** (University of Bergen)

Panel Panel: **Angela van der Berg** (UWC); **Carolyn Johns** (TMU); **Danielle Rached** (Universidade de São Paulo); **Marisa Gray** (UWC); **Rachel Cichowski** (UW); **Rochine Melandri Steenkamp** (UWC), **Regine Paul** (University of Bergen)

10:00 – 11:00

KEYNOTE by **Rachel Sieder**

ROUNDTABLE

Contesting Land in Plural Legal Regimes – Traction for Indigenous Rights?

In many parts of the world, Indigenous land claims unfold within plural legal landscapes—where customary law, national legal systems, and international human rights norms coexist, overlap, and often collide. This session explores how Indigenous communities engage these layered legal regimes to defend ancestral territories and assert collective rights. Focusing on both the challenges and possibilities of legal pluralism, the session examines how courts and other institutions are mobilized in land struggles. Can plural legal regimes offer traction for Indigenous rights, or do they reinforce legal uncertainty and state dominance? How do Indigenous actors navigate and reshape legal norms in pursuit of justice, autonomy, and environmental stewardship. This session is part of the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand: Theorizing Conflict and Contestation in Plural Land Rights Regimes**, funded by the Norwegian research council (Fripro #300851)

Moderator: **Rachel Sieder** (CIESAS and CMI)

Panel: **Namita Wahi** (Centre for Policy Research, CPR), **Tatiana Alfonso** (The Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, CIDE, Mexico), **Ana Carolina Alfinito Vieira** (Amazon Watch / Federal University of Pará), **Jorge Peláez Padilla** (Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City)

11:15 - 12:00

ROUNDTABLE

Autocratization, Indigenous rights and climate governance

As autocratic regimes gain ground globally, Indigenous peoples often find themselves on the frontlines—defending land, ecosystems, and collective rights in the face of extractive projects and state repression. This roundtable explores the intersection of autocratization, Indigenous rights, and climate governance, asking how authoritarian shifts are reshaping environmental policy, participation rights, and the space for resistance. The discussion examines how Indigenous communities engage with—and are excluded from—climate decision-making, even as their stewardship is increasingly recognized as critical to ecological sustainability. What happens to climate governance when democratic institutions weaken? How do Indigenous movements resist green authoritarianism and the instrumentalization of climate policy? And what legal, political, and transnational strategies can sustain Indigenous rights amid closing civic space and growing ecological urgency? This session is a collaboration with the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand: Theorizing Conflict and Contestation in Plural Land Rights Regimes** (NRC Fripro #300851) and the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics: Innovations in Research-Embedded Learning**, (NRCIntpart #322644)

Moderator: **Tatiana Alfonso** (The Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, CIDE, Mexico),

Introduction by **Øyvind Ravna** (University of Tromsø),

Participants: **Esam Boraey** (Cornell University), **Nathalia Dutra** (Fundação Getulio Vargas, FGV),

Raphaella Costa (University of Sao Paulo)

12:15 - 13:15

KEYNOTE by **Daniela Alaattinoglu**

ROUNDTABLE

Legal Inclusion, Identity and the Politics of Belonging

This roundtable investigates how legal systems shape inclusion and exclusion along lines of gender, race, and indigeneity. Focusing on contested claims to Indigenous identity, the session explores what it means to be deemed “Indigenous enough” to claim rights, resist extraction, or participate in governance. Through case studies including offshore territorial claims, mining-related consultation in the North, and Black-Indigenous identity in Mexico, the roundtable asks: Who defines indigeneity—and to what end? How do participatory processes reproduce or resist colonial logics? And how can Indigenous communities assert belonging amid legal ambiguity and systemic erasure? This session is a collaboration with the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand**: funded by the Norwegian research council (Fripro #300851)

Moderator: **Ruth Rubio Marin** (University of Sevilla and EUI)

Panel: **Ana Carolina Alfinito Vieira** (Amazon Watch / Federal University of Pará); **Aurora Maggi** (University of Siena); **Linn Mathisen** (University of South-Eastern Norway); **Zanele Malindi** (University of the Witwatersrand)

13:15 - 14:15

LUNCH

14:15 - 15:15

METHODS KEYNOTE & ROUNDTABLE

Transformative Judicialization

KEYNOTE by **Malcolm Langford** (University of Oslo)

Courts are increasingly central to struggles over land, territory, and socio-environmental rights. But when does judicialization become *transformative*—shifting not only outcomes, but the power relations, institutional norms, and political imaginaries underlying a conflict? This session explores how to conceptualize and assess transformative judicialization in contexts marked by legal pluralism, contested sovereignty, and ecological harm. This session examines whether—and how—judicial processes can drive structural change in land and environmental governance. What indicators signal transformation beyond legal victory? How can mixed-methods approaches help capture both the material and symbolic impacts of litigation? And what are the limits of courts in advancing justice where colonial, extractivist, and authoritarian legacies persist? This session is a collaboration with the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand**: funded by the Norwegian research council (Fripro #300851)

Moderator: **Luciana Gross Cunha** (Fundação Getulio Vargas, FGV)

Panel: **Andrew Newman** (University of Bergen), **Jayna Kothari** (Centre for Law & Policy Research, Bangalore); **Thato Masiangoako** (University of the Witwatersrand); **Varun Gauri** (Princeton University)

15:30 - 16:30

ROUNDTABLE

Litigating for Just Climate Transformation

This roundtable examines the role of litigation in advancing just climate transitions through the lens of socio-environmental conflicts. As courts are increasingly used to challenge extractivism and protect community rights, legal mobilization offers powerful possibilities—but also significant risks, including depoliticization, limited enforcement, and backlash in fragile institutional contexts. And how can and do science and scholars support legal strategies that are accountable, inclusive, and embedded in broader movements for environmental justice? How can we assess the effects of climate litigation—material, symbolic, and political? And how can and do science and scholars support legal strategies that are accountable, inclusive, and embedded in broader movements for environmental justice? This session is in collaboration with the **CET** Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation, and the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand**: funded by the NRC (Fripro #300851)

Moderator: **Siri Gloppen** (University of Bergen)

Panel: **Ben Franta** (University of Oxford); **Esmeralda Colombo** (European Institute on Economics and the Environment); and **Yann Robiou du Pont** (Utrecht University), **Sudhir Krishnaswamy** (National Law School, Bangalore)

ROUNDTABLE

16:45 -17:30

Strategic Litigation against Public Participation and the Right to Protest

Around the world, strategic lawsuits against public participation—SLAPPs—are being used to silence critics, criminalize protest, and suppress civil society engagement. These lawsuits, often disguised as defamation or procedural claims, disproportionately target environmental defenders, Indigenous leaders and journalists. This roundtable explores SLAPPs as part of a broader trend of shrinking civic space and the legal repression of dissent. We examine their impact on the rights to free expression, peaceful assembly, and environmental advocacy—particularly for Indigenous peoples defending land, water, and sovereignty. Framing the discussion within the context of international legal instruments such as the Aarhus Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we ask: How can legal frameworks be used to both resist SLAPPs and affirm the legitimacy of protest and participation? What legal and political strategies can protect those on the frontlines of environmental and social justice struggles? This session is in collaboration with the CMI/LawTransform project **PluriLand** (NRC Fripro #300851) and the University of Bergen/LawTransform project **Autocratization Dynamics** (NRCIntpart #322644).

Moderator: **Esmeralda Colombo** (European Institute on Economics and the Environment)

Panel: **Rhona Goodarzi** (McGill University), **Sofia Rolim** (FGV / University of Bergen), **Rasmus Berg** (University of Bergen), **Michał Stambulski** (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

17:45 -18:45

ROUNDTABLE

Governance for Planetary Health

The health of the planet and the health of its people are deeply intertwined—shaped not only by ecological processes, but also by legal and political decisions. How can we rethink governance to tackle the deeply interconnected crises of climate change and global health in an age of geopolitical turbulence, technological disruption, and eroding trust in institutions—and science? Scientific independence, crucial for evidence-based decision-making, is being undermined, while rapid technological change and political polarisation intensify the stakes. Addressing these “wicked problems” requires new thinking about how authority and responsibility are shared across local, national, regional, and global levels. Can law and governance institutions be reimaged to support more just and sustainable futures for both people and planet? This session will explore the urgent governance challenges for planetary health, and the emerging ideas, alliances, and strategies that might help navigate an increasingly fragmented and contested world. Bringing together scholars and practitioners from law, political science, public health, and environmental governance, the roundtable offers critical insights into the transformative potential and limitations of contemporary governance frameworks in the age of ecological emergency. This session is a collaboration with the **CET** Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation, and **BCEPS** Bergen Centre on Ethics and Priority Setting in Health.

Moderator: **Siri Gloppen** (University of Bergen, UiB)

Panel (*tbc): **Alicia Yamin** (Harvard University, digital participation); **Danielle Rached** (Universidade de São Paulo), **Jayna Kothari** (Centre for Law & Policy Research Bangalore); **Lise Rakner** (UiB); **Ole Frithjof Norheim** (Harvard University/UiB-BCEPS); **Rachel Cichowski** (University of Washington); **Yann Robiou du Pont** (Utrecht University)

FRIDAY AUGUST 22nd

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:

TRUST, JUSTICE & THE FUTURE OF WELFARE SYSTEMS

(VENUE: BERGEN GLOBAL, JEKTEVIKSBAKKEN 31)

Throughout the day, the future of welfare states is discussed using child rights as a lens. In many countries shifting cultural values, and challenges posed by inequality, demographic changes, and economic pressures are eroding the legitimacy of governing institutions, including child protection services. The sessions will explore concerns about justice, and how—in the present, uncertain times—to build trust and accountability that can sustain welfare systems and safeguard children's rights. The child rights part of the Bergen Exchanges program is a collaboration with DIPa (the University of Bergen Department of Government's Centre for Research on discretion and paternalism), funded by NRC grants no. 324966, no. 302042 and no. 320149).

9:00 – 10:00

Attitudes and Adherence to Children's Rights Across the world

This roundtable presents findings from a population survey of perceptions and attitudes towards children's rights, child protection systems and legal frameworks in 41 OECD countries. It will present findings on a range of politically sensitive and topical issues such as obesity in children; reunification of families and trust in judges.

Moderator: **Andrea Castagnola** (Di Tella University)

Panel: **Marit Skivenes** (University of Bergen); **Mathea Loen** (University of Bergen); **Zacky Dhaffa Pratama** (University of Bergen)

10:15 - 11:15

KEYNOTE

Constitutionalizing children's rights: Symbolic messaging or material meaning?

KEYNOTE by **Jill Berrick** (UC Berkeley)

Children are identified in 92% of the world's 193 written constitutions. The global recognition of children as rights-bearing individuals is a dramatic transformation and offers an indication of a historical shift in our public understanding of children. But the rights granted to children vary significantly between states and cover a range of topics. This presentation will review findings from a recent study that identified where children are made visible in national constitutions and the types of rights that are granted to children. Moreover, we examine which constitutions include accountability mechanisms to ensure the realization of children's rights. The findings raise questions about whether rights have material meaning if a framework for accountability is absent.

Moderator: **Larissa Margarido** (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Fiocruz)

Comments by: **Stefan Schnurr** (FHNW) and **Tarja Pösö** (University of Tampere)

11:30 - 12:30

ROUNDTABLE

Children's participation and access to justice

How can legal systems ensure that children and adolescents are not only protected, but also heard? This session examines the evolving landscape of children's participation in justice systems, with a particular focus on access to justice for victims of child sexual exploitation, including child pornography. The session explores barriers to meaningful participation, the importance of child-sensitive procedures, and the legal reforms needed to make justice systems more accessible, protective, and empowering for young people.

Moderator: **Mathea Loen** (University of Bergen)

Panel: **Hege Helland** (University of Bergen); **Frøydis Lønborg Haarberg** (University of Bergen);

Camila Villarroel (Fundação Getulio Vargas, FGV); **Larissa Margarido** (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Fiocruz)

12:45 - 13:45

BOOK LAUNCH & ROUNDTABLE

Child Protection and the European Court of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights has heard a large body of cases concerning the Norwegian Child Protection system, many resulting in judgments against the Norwegian state. These cases have had significant consequences in Norway – but also beyond. Activists from across Europe have been engaged in the cases, and several states have made interventions. The roundtable marks the publication of Hege Helland, Marit Skivenes & Siri Gloppen (eds.) *Child Protection and the European Court of Human Rights*. (Policy Press, forthcoming 2025), which analyses these processes. It brings together authors from the book, with practitioners who will share experiences and perspectives on the implications of the judgments and the development of practice

Moderator: **Marit Skivenes** (University of Bergen)

Presenters: **Hege Helland** (University of Bergen); **Neil Datta** (EFP); **Asgeir Falch-Eriksen** (OsloMet University) **Tarja Pösö** (Tampere University)

Commentator: **Christian B Sørensen** (Child Welfare Tribunal)

13:45 – 14:45

LUNCH

14:45 – 15:45

KEYNOTE: **Jørn Øyrehagen Sunde** (University of Oslo, University of Bergen)

The particularity of the universal – A comparison of national apex courts appliance of the universal principle in the best interest of the child

How do national apex courts apply the universal principle of the best interests of the child within diverse legal, cultural, and political contexts? This talk explores how courts in different countries interpret and operationalize this foundational norm, revealing both shared commitments and striking divergences. Through a comparative lens, the session examines the tensions between universality and particularity in child rights jurisprudence—and what this means for global norms, judicial discretion, and the lived realities of children.

Moderator: **Lucie Ducarre** (University of Bergen)

Commentators: **Lise Gro Søreide** (Hordaland District Court), **Anne Sanders** (University of Bielefeld)

16:00 - 17:00

ROUNDTABLE

Learning Exchanges: rethinking student-led learning

In this roundtable, participants from the PhD course *Effects of Lawfare: courts and law as battlegrounds for social change* - which is an integral part of the Bergen Exchanges - will reflect on their experiences. They will discuss challenges and possibilities of co-creating digital and academic spaces, rethinking hierarchies, and integrating critical perspectives into legal and social science education and research. This session is part of the **Autocratization Dynamics** project, funded by the Norwegian research council (Intpart #322644)

Moderator: **Ana Braconnier** (LawTransform/URL)

Panel: Students from the PhD Course - **Anshu Yadav** (CPR),

CLOSING of the 2025 Bergen Exchanges

18:00 - 22:00

DINNER

BERGEN GLOBAL, JEKTEVIKSBAKKEN 31, CMI ROOFTOP CAFETERIA - by invitation

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