

Department of Environmental Science and Policy

Seminar Series


How legal criteria for determining Spain's coastal public domain have evolved and their implications for adapting to climate change

Speaker: Ferran Pons Cànovas

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 **Date:** Friday, 04/24/2026

 **Time:** 12pm

 **Room:** SLAB 103 (RSMAES)



Abstract: Over the last thirty-five years, there have been -active and reactive- changes in Spanish regulations establishing the criteria that determine the configuration and boundaries of coastal public areas, especially the maritime-terrestrial zone, beaches, and dunes. These criteria serve to draw the demarcation line, a technical-legal decision approved by state administrative resolution that delimits coastal areas subject to different ownership, legal regimes, and levels of protection. Some of these regulatory changes have been based on environmental reasons, and more recently on the need to adapt the coast to the impacts of climate change, especially the rise in average sea level and the decrease in the return period of extreme events, with the consequent exposure of the population, property, and ecosystems to coastal risks of flooding, erosion, and regression. However, there have also been changes in the opposite direction in an attempt to mitigate the significant effects on private property rights resulting from the incorporation of previously private land into the public domain under new demarcations.

Bio: Ferran Pons-Cànovas (Minorca, Spain, 1967) is a Tenured Associate Professor of Administrative Law at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). He holds a Law Degree (UAB 1991), a Postgraduate degree in Real Estate and Urban Development Law (Pompeu Fabra University 1992) and a PhD in Law (UAB 1998). His research focuses on coastal and ports management, territorial and urban planning, environmental protection, climate change, sanctioning administrative procedure and private property. His current research interests include the capacity of the resilience of the coast to the impacts of climate change in the coastal legislation, maritime spatial planning, and offshore wind energy. He is the author of seven monographs, as well as numerous book chapters and scientific articles, and has drawn up numerous opinions and reports for public administrations on various issues. He is member of the UAB Research Group on Inclusive Governance and Territorial and Coastal-Marine Sustainability (INTERFASE). Through a research stay at the University of Miami, he will develop a project on the legal treatment of the coast and the sea in the United States, with particular attention to climate-change implications. His stay is funded through a mobility grant for university faculty awarded by the Spanish Government.

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