



**Universiteit  
Leiden**

## **Legal and Philosophical Perspectives on Climate Justice for Small Island Developing States**

### **Applicants**

*Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferably with an interdisciplinary approach.*

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Dr. Tim Meijers	Philosophy
Dr. Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh	Public International Law + Environment Law
Dr. Jelena Belic	Political Science (Advisor)

### **Project description**

*Provide a brief description of the project (max. 300 words)—Word-count: 292*

We live in a world where the scale and frequency of disruptive climate events is on the rise and potential for human loss unprecedented. With forests burning, storms raging, and oceans acidifying, the planet's natural systems are in free fall with an alarming number of human lives, lifelines, and livelihoods at risk. While it is fair to say *all* human lives are at stake, we must also conclude that *some* communities, cultures and peoples are disproportionately at-risk and in need of our prioritised consideration.

Global environmental harms and climate change, as collective action problems, have concurrent moral, legal and political dimensions. We need to know how to fairly divide the cost of climate change mitigation and adaptation, we need to develop a legal framework to bind actors to do their share and, crucially, there needs to be political will to implement these changes. Interestingly, considerations from different disciplinary perspectives may clash. The morally right answer might be politically unfeasible, and the legal framework - the implementation of which depends on political will, too - may be feasible only in the form of a compromise.

Our project proposes to compare and contrast how International Law and Political Philosophy inform and navigate political feasibility constraints in the context of climate justice. This becomes particularly clear in the case we focus on, that of states which - literally - see their territory threatened by climate change and face a higher risk of inundation. In the case of Small Island Developing States, climate change poses a threat to basic human and political rights, liberties and dignities precisely because mass population displacement triggers resource scarcity, record poverty and forced migration. It doesn't only threaten the lives of individual members, but also the continued existence of these nations within a sovereign state.

### Research Trainee Profile

*Each proposal requests two Research Trainees. Describe the general tasks of the research trainees, how these tasks are academically challenging to the research trainees, whether they need any preliminary knowledge (regarding the topic and/or research methods) and which skills the research trainees should have. Also specify which type of students are eligible to apply (3<sup>rd</sup> year Ba, Ma, ResMa).*

We invite applications from advanced (3rd year) BA and MA students in Philosophy, preferably with some background in (international) politics or (international or environmental) law. We welcome students particularly interested in developing a deeper understanding of current debates on global climate justice and environmental policy from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Proficiency in basic academic skills such as creating research bibliographies, collating and presenting secondary research, working collaboratively, writing is expected.

The traineeship will provide students with research skills and faculty supervision to align the research project with their own MA theses. Our research trainees will be encouraged to produce written work in line with their own areas of interest but also in close collaboration with their fellow trainee and faculty supervisors.

### Collaboration

*If applicable: Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words) Word C: 287*

This project brings together scholars from Political Philosophy and International Environmental Law to analyse the puzzles of global moral responsibility, regional equity, distributive justice and human rights at play by deeply reflecting on the current case of Small Island Developing States disrupted by climate events. The question of climate justice and collective action for these states is an active legal and political issue bound up in ethical considerations and feasibility constraints.

International Environmental Law, helps us identify clear remedies and moral obligations that can be legally entrenched as rights for small island states and their residents. In this way, we are able to better articulate the normative standard setting role the Law can play for climate action across different jurisdictions and political communities. Political Philosophy, specifically, non-ideal theories of distributive justice have a robust perspective to offer small island developing states on the key trade-offs and appropriate agents of justice involved in the context of climate justice. For instance, questions such as who unfairly bears the costs and burden of climate events? (residents). Who should bear institutional responsibility? Given the political limits (territorial, migration, reparation), what type of collective political action should small island developing states ideally aim for?

Our project is embedded in ongoing academic research, legal cases and policy debates. It links Dr. Wewerinke-Singh's ongoing projects as a scholar and practitioner on small island states, Meijers' NWO Veni project on the intersection of global and intergenerational justice as well as Dr. Belic' (PI) interdisciplinary GTGC project on Human Rights in the Anthropocene. The trainees will spend time at the Institute for Philosophy (in particular the Centre for Political Philosophy) and the Grotius Centre for International Law. They will be encouraged to actively participate in the research activities, such as research colloquia and guest lectures.

## Deliverables

*Enumerate intended project results: papers, research proposals or otherwise. (max 200 words)*

Each student-trainee will be asked to:

- (1) identify a contemporary case and island state based on personal research interest
- (2) compile a research bibliography of selected case law and secondary sources with an emphasis on sources from political philosophy and international environmental law
- (3) author a short analytical essay that draws upon the interdisciplinary project research bibliography and is also incorporated with the student's own MA thesis.
- (4) co-author with faculty supervisors a book review of recent literature for publishing in a peer-reviewed academic journal
- (5) host and organize multidisciplinary climate justice conference with supervisors on '*Climate Justice for at-risk Island States*'. Trainees would present their essays and research project to a wider academic community of faculty and students from the Institute of Philosophy and Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies.

*\*The theme, length and scope of all essays to be determined in consultation with supervisors*

## Planning

*Provide a breakdown of the project (7 months) into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)*

February-March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Introductory Orientation with Supervisors + Review of background literature</li> <li>—Trainees shortlist contemporary case-studies based on personal interest.</li> <li>—Supervisors and Trainees select literature for book-review and shortlist interdisciplinary academic journals</li> <li>—Trainees submit annotated bibliography and analytical essay outline to supervisors</li> </ul>
April-May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Trainees prepare research notes for analytical essay</li> <li>—Trainees and Supervisors submit book-review draft for publication</li> <li>—Trainees present their MA thesis chapter-proposals incorporating research questions on Global Climate Justice</li> <li>—Preliminary activities concerning potential multidisciplinary conference</li> </ul>
June-July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Trainees submit rough draft of analytical essay</li> <li>—Trainees and Supervisors meet to review drafts and discuss feedback</li> <li>—Trainees revise and submit final versions with clear research questions for integration with MA thesis</li> <li>—Selecting topics for opinion essays for publication on Institute of Philosophy + Grotius Legal Centre website</li> </ul>
July -August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Trainees and Supervisors host multidisciplinary climate justice conference in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy and The Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies.</li> </ul>

## Student Application

*Provide information on how to apply e.g. required documents for application (resume, motivation letter etc.) and an email address where student applications should be sent to.*

Interested students should send their applications to [t.meijers@phil.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:t.meijers@phil.leidenuniv.nl). The application should include a CV (no more than 2 pages) and a Letter of Motivation (**one page**) outlining their interest in environmental ethics or global climate justice listing at least two motivating questions.