

Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research

Annual PhD Training

16th and 17th November 2020 – Online (links will be provided)

First Day: Methodology of Legal Research – 16th November

9-9.15 Kick off with opening remarks and introductions: Professor Antoine Buyse, Director of SIM and Dr León Castellanos-Jankiewicz, Academic Coordinator, NNHRR

9.30-11.00 Roundtable on methodology, Professor Elaine Mak, Utrecht University and Professor Wibren van der Burg, Erasmus University

In the first half of this roundtable session, Professor Elaine Mak and Professor Wibren van der Burg will provide an overview and critical reflection on what methodology means in ‘legal scholarship’. They will address the different types of research design, giving attention to different research objectives such as descriptive, classifying, comparative, theory-building, evaluative and normative. They will give particular attention to the need to determine normative points of reference for evaluative and normative research, making explicit and justifying the (normative) choices that are made and acknowledging the limits of the research design. Attention will be paid to the increased focus on interdisciplinarity in academic research, examining how data from different disciplinary studies can be translated and incorporated into legal studies. When addressing these different elements, attention will be given to the choices and implications of conducting different kinds of research.

11.00-13.00 Break (including lunch)

13.00-14.30 How to conduct open-semi structured interviews? Dr Stephanie Rap, Leiden University

This session will explore research based on open semi-structured interviews. After addressing the reasons to use interviews as a method, it will address choice of respondents and gaining access. It will address how to combine interviewing with other qualitative methods, for example observations, focus groups, etc. Attention will be given to the design of interviews, looking at different kinds of questions and different roles for the interviewer. The session will also cover the ethical considerations that accompany interviewing, with attention being given to consent, use, anonymity, note-taking and recording.

Coffee 14.30-15.30 Online coffee hangout

15.30-16.30 The human rights researcher: academic, activist or both? Professor Yvonne Donders, University of Amsterdam, Chair of the Steering Committee, NNHRR

Doing human rights research is all about normativity. Many human rights researchers are also human rights activists. How does that influence your research? Some have accused human rights researchers of "human rightism" (Alain Pellet), turning every issue into a human rights issue. Other have maintained that human rights lawyers are notoriously "wishful thinkers" (John Humphrey), doing sloppy legal analysis and arguing towards a pre-set goal, which is often that human rights and the human rights system should be strengthened. How do you see this (or not) in your own research? How do you combine your academic mind with your human rights heart?

16.30-17.30 [Online social activity]

Second day: Surviving a PhD – 17th November

9.30-11.00 Research question workshop, Dr Katharine Fortin and Dr Julie Fraser, Utrecht University

Each PhD candidate should come ready to discuss their research questions, sub-questions and research design with a group. In a group environment, they will be asked to present their question, trying to qualify their research objectives and identify and define any relevant norms used in their research. This session will provide an opportunity for participants to share any difficulties they have in the current research design and seek input from their peers.

11.00-11.30 Coffee

11.30-12.30 Mindfulness and surviving the PhD trajectory, Jacky Limvers, Utrecht University

Mindfulness is a combination of Western psychology and Buddhist meditation. A great deal of research has been done into its effects on wellbeing, learning ability, stress and worry. Mindfulness practice is training your attention. It may offer a different outlook on things we usually take for granted. Being more aware of what is going on in your mind and body, it can help you to release stress, make beneficial changes or accept when changing is not an option. In this workshop you will learn some exercises that you can also do at home that will help you keep stress at bay during the PhD trajectory.

12.30-14.00 Lunch

14.00-14.30 Academic blogging: why and how? Professor Antoine Buyse and Dr Katharine Fortin, Utrecht University

Antoine Buyse and Katharine Fortin will explain some of the benefits of legal blogging, with reference to their own experiences as founder and editor of the [ECHR blog](#) and the [Armed Groups and International Law](#) blogs. They will also provide some advice on the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of legal blogging, explaining what in their view makes a good blog post.

14.30-15.00 The NNHRR blog – meeting with editors

15.00-15.30 Online coffee hangout

15.30-16.30 Academic output, during your PhD and beyond? Navigating the world of publishing, Dr Brianne McGonigle Leyh, Utrecht University

It is sensible to start thinking early about where and how you're going to publish your PhD research. This session will run through the advantages and disadvantages of the different publishing options that are available. It will address how to choose a publisher and how to prepare your manuscript for publication, touching on practical details like editing, indexing, printing, copies, costs and sales.