

Don't Look [Down]! The Ahistorical Space of International Law

Date: 11 December 2024

Time: 15:00-16:30 CET

Location: In-person event at the T.M.C. Asser Instituut, R.J. Schimmelpennincklaan 20-22, 2517 JN, Den Haag

Registration: This seminar is invite-only. Should you wish to join, please send an email with your name, affiliation and a few lines expressing your interest to c.lewis@asser.nl.

Speakers:

- **Prof. Nikolas Rajkovic**– Chair of International Law, Tilburg University
- **Florentine Vos**– Consultant, Volterra Fietta
- **Prof. Liesbeth Lijnzaad** – Endowed Professor, Practice of International Law (part-time), Maastricht University, and Judge at the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea

Overview:

Prof. Nikolas Rajkovic's work invites us to consider the enigmatic place of geography within the discipline of International Law. For Rajkovic, International Law remains defined by core concepts with inherent geographic and cartographic lineage, such as territory, territoriality, extraterritoriality, and jurisdiction. Yet, few notice how the generative notions of cartography and geometry became quietly subsumed by, and forgotten within, the institutionalized grammar of territory and jurisdiction. This, Rajkovic argues, has left international lawyers—among many experts—stuck to an eternalized “World Map” of states that hinders scrutiny into novel geometric and non-geometric boundaries of authority.

In this seminar, our expert panel will address the place of geography within the discipline of international law from various perspectives. Prof. Rajkovic will begin by unpacking his argument on there being a misplaced concreteness assigned to statist cartography that overlooks how the *res*—or material thereness—of boundaries actually reside in evolving assemblages of maps, lists, algorithms, guards, fences, gates, ISO standards, weapons, passports and other technologies, which have given material life to such axioms as states and markets. **Florentine Vos** will then address the role of geography in inter-State litigation and negotiations, from a practitioner's perspective. In particular, she will discuss the use of maps and charts in land and maritime boundary dispute resolution. She will highlight practical aspects to consider when working with maps and charts, for example in the use of data collection, as evidence, when collaborating with different experts and in treaty drafting. She will provide us with examples of what can go right and wrong in these respects, as well as how States deal with geography in public international law in their day-to-day dealings. **Prof. Liesbeth Lijnzaad** will close by reflecting on the presentations, providing her perspective on delimitation, boundaries and charts and the many ways of reading maps/charts that international lawyers will encounter.

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Speaker bios



Nikolas M. Rajkovic is Professor and Chair of International Law at Tilburg University (The Netherlands) and is the former Head of the Department of Public Law and Governance (PLG). He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Law Department of the European University Institute (Italy). Nikolas is senior faculty, and an Academic Council, member of the Harvard Law School's Institute for Global Law and Policy (IGLP). His current research is at the intersection of International Law, International Relations, and Critical Geography. He is writing a new book forthcoming with Cambridge University Press in 2026: *Off the Map: A Critical Geography of International Law*.



Florentine Vos is Consultant at Volterra Fietta. Florentine advises and represents States, international organisations and private clients on issues of public international law and international dispute settlement, including before the International Court of Justice and other international courts and tribunals. She has advised States in six ICJ matters, including *Somalia v Kenya*, *DRC v Uganda* and in *Qatar v UAE*, and is currently advising Barbados in the ICJ Advisory Opinion on climate change case and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion on climate change. Florentine is a Dutch-qualified lawyer and has been called to the Bar of England and Wales. She holds degrees in law from the University of Cambridge and the University of Leiden.



Liesbeth Lijnzaad is a judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (since 2017). She is a member of the Seabed Disputes Chamber, the Chamber for Summary Procedures as well as the Chamber for Maritime Delimitation Disputes of the Tribunal. She is a Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and a conciliator and arbitrator under Annexes V and VII of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. She is also endowed Professor of Practice of International Law at Maastricht University (since 2011).