

PhD Position: Human Rights in the Menstrual Movement (ERC-funded PERIODS project, South Africa case study)

Do you agree that menstruation is about so much more than blood? Are you interested in linking menstruation to broader questions of gender justice and social mobilization? Then this PhD position might be the right fit for you. – The position is part of the [PERIODS](#) project on Human Rights in the Menstrual Movement funded by the European Research Council and led by Dr. Inga Winkler. You will play a key role in the project by taking the lead on the case study in South Africa focused on the intersections of informality, gender and menstruation in the urban context.

The project examines how menstruators' lives are shaped by socio-cultural norms and processes of compounded stigmatization and marginalization. On that basis, the project seeks to determine how lived experiences inform movement building, what demands people articulate, what strategies and approaches groups rely on, and how struggles at the local, national, transnational, and global level influence each other.

The PhD project will explore the **intersections between informality, patriarchy and menstruation**. PERIODS stresses that people's lived experiences of menstruation vary widely shaped by ethnicity, religion, culture, caste, disability, gender identity, place of residence, among many other factors. Going beyond the notion of the 'default' menstruator, the case study will center the lived experiences of communities living and working in conditions of urban informality. The study will inquire: How do people navigate gender relations? What coping mechanisms do they develop? What does privacy mean for people living in informal settlements? How do gendered social norms and expectations of modesty shape the understanding of public and private? – We are beginning to see organized resistance to demand menstrual justice. For instance, women have protested by marching in the streets in red-stained underwear and demanding improved access to services. Therefore, in a second component, the study will investigate: How do menstruating individuals mobilize and protest? What are their demands, and do they accommodate and/or challenge gendered social norms?

Your duties and responsibilities include:

- Develop the research design for the PhD project at the intersection of menstruation, gender and informality and obtain ethical clearance in line with the goals of the funding award
- Collect data through interviews and focus groups and other empirical methods and conduct data analysis and management
- Collaborate with team members on other components of the project (in particular on other forms of marginalization and stigmatization)
- Write and publish in peer-reviewed venues
- Support other activities as relevant during each stage of the project and participate in the activities of the Law group at Wageningen University and the Chair in Urban Law and Sustainability Governance at Stellenbosch University.

You will work closely with the team on the PERIODS project, which, apart from your position, includes the principal investigator (PI), a PostDoc, other PhD candidates who work on case studies in India and Hungary, and a research assistant. You will be co-supervised by Dr. Inga Winkler at Wageningen University and Prof. Anél du Plessis at Stellenbosch University.

The host institution in South Africa is the Stellenbosch University Chair in Urban Law and Sustainability Governance. The Chair's work focuses on the intersection between urban development, sustainability and environmental law, with research also being done on law and informality in South African cities. A team of LLM and LLD researchers, as well as postdoctoral fellows, work closely with Prof Anél du Plessis, who leads the Chair.

To meet the requirements of the role, you will bring:

- Advanced skills in research, analysis, critical thinking, and writing
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team in a dynamic, interdisciplinary and intercultural research environment
- Outstanding communication skills that enable you to work in an intercultural setting across timezones and geographies
- Excellent organizational and management skills that enable you to balance different tasks and priorities
- Familiarity with the geographic and socio-cultural context of this South African case study

You must also have:

- A successfully completed MSc, MA, LLM or equivalent degree in law, sociology, anthropology, gender studies, socio-legal studies, public health, or other relevant discipline
- Interest in research on human rights, gender, and/or social movements
- Training in qualitative empirical research methods and/or socio-legal studies, ideally working with groups facing marginalization
- Familiarity with developments in the field of human rights and critiques of human rights
- In addition to English, fluency in other South African language(s) such as isiXhosa and Afrikaans will be considered a strong asset. Please indicate your language skills.

In our international working environment, communication on the project team takes place entirely in English. This requires about [language level](#) C1 .

You will work here:

The PERIODS project is funded by an ERC Consolidator Grant and runs from 2025 to 2030. It explores the promises, pitfalls, and renewed potential of human rights in the menstrual movement. PERIODS has two central objectives: first, to develop a thick and nuanced understanding of human rights in the menstrual movement, and second to generate empirical insights from a young, translocal, global South-driven movement for the reconceptualization of human rights based on social practice. The project centers the social practice of human rights in the menstrual movement by drawing on the articulations of lived experiences of people who menstruate, and on the perspectives of movement leaders. It combines empirical research using in-depth interviews, focus groups, qualitative surveys, and document analysis with conceptual work grounded in human rights. Theoretically, the project is rooted in the critical engagement with human rights and a re-envisioning of human rights ‘from below’. It considers the practice of human rights in the menstrual movement as constitutive of what matters for the realization *and* conceptualization of human rights.

The project is led by Dr. Inga Winkler, an Associate Professor in Human Rights. It is embedded in the Law Group chaired by Prof. Louis Kotzé at Wageningen University. The Law Group is a vibrant, dynamic, intercultural research community that is closely integrated into the Department of Social Sciences, has a critical, socio-legal orientation and stresses interdisciplinary research.

We offer you

- A four year PhD position (spending Years 1 and 4 in the Netherlands and Years 2 and 3 in South Africa) starting as soon as possible
- Monthly stipends adjusted to the cost of living in the Netherlands and South Africa over the full four years
- Enrollment in the PhD programme of the Wageningen School of Social Sciences at Wageningen University, including PhD courses, library access and ICT services
- A course program tailored to your needs and that of the research project

- Support through the research community in the PERIODS project, including other PhD students, supervisors, the project's Advisory Group, and social movement leaders
- Additional support through the research community in the Chair in Urban Law and Sustainability Governance at Stellenbosch University

Do you want more information?

For more information about the position, please contact Inga Winkler, Associate Professor in Human Rights via inga.winkler@wur.nl.

Do you want to apply?

Please send your application via email to inga.winkler@wur.nl.

Please submit the following documents –

- 1) **Curriculum Vitae**
- 2) **Full academic record / transcripts of your degrees**
- 3) **Motivation / cover letter detailing your qualifications and interest**
- 4) **Article-length writing sample (6,000 to 10,000 words)**
- 5) **Contact information for 2 references who are able to comment on your research skills and output to date (who can be contacted upon shortlisting).**

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis and you are encouraged to submit your materials as early as possible. The first interviews are scheduled for 1 and 2 October 2025.