



DR.10 DOCTORAL THESIS EVALUATION REPORT <sup>1</sup>		
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE		
First and last name:	Leon Žganec-Brajša, mag. iur.	
Registration number:	50DMP2019	
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY PROGRAMME		
Institution responsible for organizing the studies:	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, University of Padua, University of Nicosia, University of Western Sydney	
Name of study programme:	Doctoral study Human rights, society and multi-level governance	
Name of partner institution (in case of dual doctorate):		
Name of doctoral study programme at partner institution (in case of dual doctorate):		
Area / field / branch (if the doctoral study programme is performed within a branch):	Social Sciences/Law/International Law	
INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL THESIS		
Thesis language	English	
Thesis title:	<i>In the language of the thesis</i>	Sea Level Rise: Small Island States and Human Rights
	<i>In Croatian</i>	Podizanje razine mora: male otočne države i ljudska prava
	<i>In English</i>	Sea Level Rise: Small Island States and Human Rights
MENTOR(S)		
	<b>Full name, title:</b>	<b>Institution, country:</b>
Mentor:	Prof. Davorin Lapaš, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
Mentor:	Prof. Siniša Zrinščak, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
THESIS EVALUATION COMMITTEE		
Appointed Thesis Evaluation Committee <sup>2</sup> :	<b>Full name, title:</b>	<b>Institution, country:</b>
	1. Prof. Maja Seršić, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia

<sup>1</sup> Forward the completed and signed DR.10 form to the appropriate Student Office in digital and print format.

<sup>2</sup>Committee members 6 and 7 only in case of a dual doctorate



	2. Prof. Davor Adrian Babić, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
	3. Prof. Vesna Barić Punda, PhD	University of Split Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
	4. Doc. Rutvica Rusan Novokmet, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
	5. Assoc. prof. Drago Župarić-Iljić, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of philosophy, Republic of Croatia
	6.	
	7.	
	<b>Session of the competent body and agenda item within which the Committee was appointed:</b>	Session of the Council of the Faculty of Law on January 28 2026. point 21.

### DOCTORAL THESIS EVALUATION

<b>Thesis form:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> monograph <input type="checkbox"/> Scandinavian model <input type="checkbox"/> artistic work	
<b>Thesis is evaluated:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> for the first time	<input type="checkbox"/> after revision
<b>Thesis should be:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> accepted <input type="checkbox"/> revised <input type="checkbox"/> rejected	

**Explanation for the above opinion** (*specifying original scientific or artistic contribution and new discovery*):

Doctoral student Leon Žganec-Brajša, mag iur. has prepared and submitted his doctoral thesis entitled Sea Level Rise: Small Island States and Human Rights/ Podizanje razine mora: male otočne države i ljudska prava in accordance with the approval of the Council of the Faculty of Law and the Senate of the University of Zagreb. The doctoral dissertation of doctoral student Leon Žganec-Brajša, mag. iur. is written in English and comprises a total of 402 pages, of which 340 pages are the text of the dissertation and 61 pages are bibliography. The work is divided into an Introduction, four extensive chapters, and a conclusion. The text of the dissertation is preceded by extended summaries in English and Croatian. From the analysis of the manuscript in the Turnitin program, it is determined that the doctoral thesis of Leon Žganec-Brajša shows 15% similarity with literature and other sources, all of which are consistently cited according to valid academic standards. This confirms the authenticity and originality of this work. In his dissertation, the doctoral candidate addresses a current and complex topic in international law, in which he connects the phenomenon of climate change, its consequences in the form of rising sea levels, which according to classical international law calls into question the statehood, of small island states due to the fact of their low altitude, and addresses the related issue of the fate of their population, their human rights, including the issue of their right to self-determination and the preservation of national identity. After a detailed analysis of the aforementioned problems, which opened perspectives that go beyond legal concepts, the doctoral student elaborates three solutions that are proposed in the latest developments in international law: the recognition of the statehood of deterritorialized small island states, the applicability of international legal protection of stateless persons to population of small island states if the continuity of their



statehood is not accepted by the international community, i.e. in international law, and the position of climate deterritorialized peoples as new categories of climate migrants in the potential country of their acceptance by analyzing the possibility of analogous application of existing solutions of international refugee or international migration law (e.g. prohibition of *refoulement* or even prohibition of collective expulsion, provision of so-called international protection in third countries).

The doctoral student successfully conceived his research and logically structured his doctoral work. In his research, he applied adequate scientific methods and answered the initial research questions, achieving the goals and expected results of his research. Based on a systematic and comprehensive theoretical basis that stems primarily from an international legal, but also a broader social perspective, he analysed the issue, and then, based on the analysis, interpretation and criticism of existing rules of international law, proposed *de lege ferenda* solutions for some of the most current existing issues and problems that arise in practice in this regard. Therefore, this comprehensive scientific monograph represents an original scientific contribution and a valuable addition to Croatian international legal science.

**Opinion and proposal:**

The doctoral dissertation of the doctoral candidate Leon Žganec-Brajša, mag.iur., provides an original scientific contribution to the contemporary development of international law, especially in terms of the possible new development of the concept of subjectivity, statehood, and the protection of human rights, both through progressive interpretations of existing international legal institutes, and through the possibility of the emergence of new subjects of international law, such as climatically deterritorialized peoples or the development of new collective human rights.

The Committee is of the opinion that the doctoral thesis of Leon Žganec-Brajša, mag.iur. is an exceptionally successful scientific work, of original significance in the world literature on this topic, which enables the doctoral candidate to obtain the academic degree of Doctor of Science.

**Separate opinion (only if a member of the Thesis Evaluation Committee has a separate opinion):**

Signature

(full name of Committee member)

**Additional comments (optional)**

	Full name, title, institution, country	Signature
	1. Prof. Maja Seršić, PhD (Chair of the Committee)	



Signatures of Thesis Evaluation Committee members <sup>3</sup>	2. Prof. Davor Adrian Babić, PhD	
	3. Prof. Vesna Barić Punda, PhD	
	4. Doc. Rutvica Rusan Novokmet, PhD	
	5. Assoc. prof. Drago Župarić-Iljić, PhD	
	6.	
	7.	
In Zagreb, on 24 March 2026 (place and date)		

<sup>3</sup> Committee members 6 and 7 only in case of a dual doctorate.