

# Christiaan van Veen

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Human rights lawyer and researcher with an analytical mind and entrepreneurial spirit. Strongly believes in the law as both a shield and a sword against injustice. Resourceful and creative. Effective communicator and networker.

## Professional experience

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September 2025-present

**Co-Founder** | *Leitmotiv* | *Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

One of the founders of Leitmotiv, a think-and-do tank for an alternative digital economy that operates within planetary boundaries, where excessive concentration of corporate power is contained by democratic forces and where human rights, dignity, and equality are respected and promoted. Leitmotiv is primarily a research organization, but also engages in evidence-based policy and legislative advocacy and supports strategic litigation through its research.

November 2024-present

**Independent Consultant** | *Human Rights Research and Practice*

Undertaking research at the intersection of human rights law and practice and major rights challenges, including the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and the dangers of digital technologies.

September 2023-August 2024

**Attorney** | *Paulussen Advocaten* | *Maastricht, the Netherlands*

Part of the climate change litigation team, led by Roger Cox, that litigated the groundbreaking *Urgenda v. Dutch State* and *Milieudefensie v. Shell* climate cases before Dutch civil courts. Represented and advised clients on matters at the intersection of climate change and human rights law.

July 2019 – December 2022

**Director** | *Center for Human Rights and Global Justice / NYU Law* | *New York, United States*

Founder and director of the *Digital Welfare State and Human Rights Project*. The project's aim was to investigate how digitalization is changing the operation of the State and how this affects the human rights of individuals and communities living in poverty. This was achieved through independent research, fostering exchange and through advocacy-oriented work, including strategic human rights litigation, engaging with UN human rights mechanisms and participating in legislative and regulatory consultations. Among many other achievements, the project was instrumental in organizing and participating in strategic human rights litigation against a digital ID system in Uganda and participating in strategic litigation in the Netherlands about a digital welfare fraud detection system. The project also launched a successful platform for interaction and knowledge exchange between scholars and advocates in this field and closely collaborated with a UN Special Rapporteur on a thematic report to the UNGA on 'digital welfare states' and human rights.

## Education

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**New York University School of Law, United States**

*LLM in International Legal Studies* (2014)

Included the following courses: International Human Rights Law; International Organizations; International Criminal Law; Indigenous Peoples in International Law; International Humanitarian Law; International Trade Law.

**Utrecht University, the Netherlands**

*LLM in International and European Law*

(2007). Awarded with the qualification '*cum laude*' for exceptional achievement. Top 2% of my class. Included the following courses: Human Rights in International and European Law; Human Rights in International Relations; Constitutional Law of the European Union; European Constitutional and Administrative Law; Equal Treatment in the European Union; European Competition Law; European/International Criminal Law; Constitutional and Administrative Law.

**Utrecht University, the Netherlands**

*LLB in Law*, including a minor in Journalism and a focus on International and European law (2005).

September 2014 – May 2020

**Senior advisor | UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights | New York, United States**

Led the team of the UNSR, an independent human rights expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. As Senior advisor, I led the research and drafting of dozens of thematic and country reports to the UN and communications to governments about human rights issues intersecting with poverty. I was the driving force on this UN mandate behind reports and campaigns about, *inter alia*, the legal responsibility of the UN for causing a cholera outbreak in Haiti and the lack of a human rights policy at the World Bank. In charge of organizing and participating in high-profile country visits by the UNSR to Chile, Romania, Mauritania, China, Saudi-Arabia, US and UK. Participated in and organized meetings and events with heads of state and government and leadership of international organizations and civil society organizations. From September 2018 until May 2020 I served as the Special Advisor of the UNSR on new technologies and human rights.

June 2014 – August 2014

**NYU International Finance and Development Fellow | World Bank | Washington DC, United States**

Selected by the World Bank for this NYU Fellowship. I worked in the *Governance and Anti-Corruption Team* within the Bank's *Legal Vice Presidency*. Among other assignments, I contributed to legal research on including fines in the Bank's internal anti-corruption framework and article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

September 2008 – July 2013

**Attorney | Brinkhof | Amsterdam, the Netherlands**

Represented and advised clients in the areas of European Union law, EU and Dutch competition law, EU and Dutch telecom regulation and media law. I acted primarily on behalf of clients in the telecom, media, health, pharmaceutical and energy sectors. I managed merger and acquisition notifications before Dutch competition authorities, defended clients in cartel investigations by Dutch and EU competition authorities, and represented clients before national and EU courts. Supervised a team of junior attorneys. Ranked in Chambers Europe 2013 as 'Associate to Watch' in the category Competition/European Law. I started at Brinkhof in September 2008 as a paralegal and worked as an attorney from May 2009 until December 2012. I continued to work for Brinkhof from January 2013 until July 2013 as legal advisor (from NYC).

March 2008 – July 2008

**Trainee | European Commission | Brussels, Belgium**

Selected by the European Commission for the prestigious 'Blue Book' Traineeship at the *Legal Service* of the Commission. Primarily worked on litigation before the Court of Justice of the European Union. Involved in cases about taxation and the free movement of capital and freedom to provide services (C-155/08 & C-157/08, 'X'), games of chance and freedom to provide services (C-203/08, 'Betfair'), customs duties (C-7/08, 'Har Vaessen' and C-124/08 & C-125/08, 'Snauwaert'), taxation and freedom of movement of workers (C-527/06, 'Renneberg'), nomenclature and tariff headings (C-150/08, 'Siebrand'), judicial cooperation in civil matters (C-195/08 PPU, 'Rinau'; first use of the 'urgent preliminary reference procedure') and environmental impact assessments (Case C-255/08).

March 2007 – August 2007

**Lawyer | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | The Hague, the Netherlands**

Worked in the *Legal Affairs Department* of the Ministry. Primarily worked on litigation before the CJEU. Involved in cases about games of chance and the freedom to provide services (C-525/06, 'Nationale Loterij' and C-42/07, 'Liga Portuguesa'), taxation (C-48/07, 'Les Vergers'), equal treatment in employment and occupation (C-267/06, 'Tadao Maruko'), freedom of movement for students (C-158/07, 'Förster') and air quality (C-237/07, 'Janecek').

## Teaching & Extracurricular activities

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**New York University School of Law** (United States), *Adjunct Professor* (April 2021-present). Developed and taught a graduate course on *International Human Rights and Digital Governance* in the Fall of 2021 and 2022.

**University of Melbourne Law School** (Australia), *Senior Fellow* (December 2020-December 2023). Developed and taught a graduate course on *Human Rights and the Digital State* in the Spring of 2022 and 2023.

**European University Institute** (Italy), *Lecturer* (Summer 2019). Developed and taught the 'General Course' titled *Can Human Rights Survive the Digital Age?* in the Summer School on Human Rights Law at the European University Institute Academy of European Law.

**Land van Ons** (the Netherlands), *Coordinator* (August 2024-present). Volunteer for this nation-wide cooperative with nearly 30,000 members. Supporting the purchase and development of agricultural land to promote biodiversity. Set up a team of ecologists and other volunteers to support local farmers on a 13 hectares plot of land to farm in a nature-friendly and biodiversity promoting-way.

**Law Commission of Ontario** (Canada), *Advisory Board member* (January 2020-August 2022). Project on Artificial Intelligence in Ontario's Civil and Administrative Justice System.

**Graduate Institute** (Switzerland), *Advisory Committee member* (March 2021-December 2022). Digital Health and Rights Project.

## Languages

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- Dutch (native)
- English (fluent)
- French (intermediate)
- German (beginner)

## Contact

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