

ISLANDS AND SMALL STATES INSTITUTE - ISSI at the University of Malta

Annual Report

Academic Year 2023/24

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Forewords

Professor Frank Bezzina - Pro-Rector, and Chair of the Islands and Small States Institute Board

The Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) of the University of Malta (UM) during the academic year 2023/2024 continued to contribute to consolidate the aims of the University of Malta's Strategic Plan. The success in obtaining prestigious EU and International research grants, and in providing support to national and international policies to champion the interest of islands and small states, strengthened its leadership and excellence in islands and small state studies.

The continued cooperation that the ISSI maintained with other centres, institutes, departments, at the UM, contributed to enrich interdisciplinary collaborations, an essential and purposely planned objective. ISSI's Doctoral and Masters programmes both experienced an increase in the number, and the quality, of students, also increasing the number of joint supervisions and collaborations.

The excellent foundations laid in these years will allow the ISSI to build an even stronger future, with the objective of strengthening to the overall development of students, academic staff and the University at large.

Professor Stefano Moncada - Director

The academic year 2023/24 represented a further period of expansion for the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI), for our teaching, research, international recognition and outreach. The number of students in the Master by research and the Doctoral Programme, continued to steadily increase, by also consolidating the cooperation with other and centres, institutes, departments, schools at the UM, thus truly embracing the interdisciplinary nature of islands and small states studies. The total number of doctoral students enrolled with the ISSI increased to 14, with two who officially graduated. The rich diversity of backgrounds and countries of origin of the new cohorts continue to make the Institute among the most international looking entities at the University of Malta, reaffirming the interdisciplinary nature of the ISSI and its capacity to attract good quality students from the four corners of the world.

In terms of research, the academic staff affiliated to the ISSI continued to contribute to the islands and small states studies scholarly body of knowledge by publishing in reputable international peer reviewed journals and publishing houses. In addition to this, the ISSI finalised the two years project funded by the University of Malta Excellence Award entitled 'Beyond Pandemics: Improving climate resilience and health systems in small island states', presented its results at prestigious international conferences and publishing findings in reputable international scholarly journals. The prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (EU) project, led by researcher Dr Pedro Pombo, entitled "Heritage Ecologies: culture, resilience and development in Island States (ECO-HERITAGES)", continued to be operational and conducted cutting edge fieldwork in Malta and the islands of the Indian Ocean. The ISSI was also instrumental to obtain a further Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (EU) Doctoral Network project, entitled "MEDiverSEAty - In quest of the human dimensions of Mediterranean Marine

Biodiversity”, where the ISSI shall host two PhD positions and coordinate the training work package for the whole consortium.

The ISSI also consolidated further alliances with strategic partners in Malta and abroad, especially the University of Cagliari, to continue expanding our teaching and research breadth. The ISSI also continued the strategic collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, supporting its work at European and International level, especially on issues related to the vulnerability and resilience of small states.

The success of these new initiatives, and the consolidation of on-going work, was made possible by the efforts and dedication of all the people who work with the ISSI. Allow me to thank our Chair, Prof. Frank Bezzina, the ISSI Administrator Ms Godianne Montebello, our research officers Pedro Pombo, Luca Nguyen, Dominik Kalweit and William Grech, and all board members and colleagues who cooperate with us. Although based in other centres, institutes and departments, their contribution has been essential to continue positioning the ISSI as a world-renowned centre of excellence in islands and small states studies. To the next year!

1. Staff and Boards at The Islands and Small States Institute

Director of the Institute

Prof. Stefano Moncada, stefano.moncada@um.edu.mt

Academic Staff

Prof. Lino Briguglio, lino.briguglio@um.edu.mt

Research and Support Staff

Ms Godianne Montebello (Administrator II), godianne.scicluna@um.edu.mt

Mr Dominik Kalweit (Research Support Officer I), dominik.kalweit@um.edu.mt

Mr William Grech (Research Support Officer I), william.grech@um.edu.mt

Mr Luca Thuan Nguyen Dinh (Research Support Officer II), luca.nguyen@um.edu.mt

Dr Pedro Pombo (Marie Curie European Research Officer), pedro.sobral-pombo@um.edu.mt

Chair of the Islands and Small States Institute Board

Prof. Frank Bezzina, frank.bezzina@um.edu.mt

Islands and Small States Institute Board Members

Prof. Stefano Moncada (Director)

Prof. Roderick Pace (Senate Appointee)

Prof. Saviour Formosa (Scholar of Repute)

Dr Ing. Charles Yousif (Scholar of Repute)

Prof. Dominic Fenech (Council Appointee)

Dr Valentina Cassar (Scholar of Repute)

Prof. Lino Briguglio (Academic Staff Representative)

Mr Jwala Rambarran (Student Representative)

Ms Stephanie Marie Perrine (Student Representative)

Board of Studies of the M.A. (RISS)

Prof. Stefano Moncada (Director)

Prof. Lino Briguglio

Prof. Ing. Charles Yousif

Doctoral Academic Committee of the ISSI

Prof. Stefano Moncada (Director)

Prof. Lino Briguglio

Prof. Ing. Charles Yousif

Dr Valentina Cassar

During the academic year 2022/23, the following meetings were held:

Board:

- 23 January 2024
- 14 May 2024

Board of Studies:

- 8 January 2024
- 10 May 2024

PhD Committees:

- 8 January 2024

The Board of Examiners also meets in separate zoom meetings and approves items/requests online, when needed.

2. Teaching at the Islands and Small States Institute

The ISSI offers postgraduate courses in the area of islands and small states studies. The strong interdisciplinary nature of our courses makes it attractive for many prospective students, who are joining from a variety of disciplines, with the added objective of supporting the teaching and research in islands and small states studies to become more mainstreamed into traditional and emerging disciplines.

2.1. Postgraduate courses

The ISSI offers a taught MA, a MA by research, and a PhD programme in islands and small states studies. The taught MA in Islands and Small States Studies has been offered since the inception of the ISSI, over 35 years ago, and has trained a sizeable number of students both in Malta and abroad. During the past three years, this taught MA course was restructured, with the aim of updating some of its study units, and to also allow single study units to be offered to the general public, as stand-alone units, in line with the intention to widen the training and educational opportunities offered by the University of Malta.

The MA by research was introduced for the first time in the academic year 2018-2019, and has been running since then, exhibiting a steady number of students year by year, and showing an excellent capacity to attract students from Malta, Gozo, but especially internationally. In fact, the percentage of foreign students has been keeping constant with 60 to 70 per cent enrolling from outside Malta.

The PhD programme in Islands and Small States Studies, unique in the world, was also recently restructured and aligned with some of the teaching offered through the MA by research. This is allowing all PhD students to follow those same study units being taught in the MA by research, with the aim of receiving a proper background in islands and small states studies, and to solidify their basis in research design and methodology.

2.1.1. Master of Arts in Islands and Small State Studies

This postgraduate course carries 90 ECTS, in line with the EU Bologna Process, and runs on a part-time basis over the course of two years (5 semesters).

The Master of Arts in Islands and Small States Studies is offered at both the University of Malta Main Campus and the Gozo Campus. The aim of the programme is to impart knowledge on islands and small states issues and to provide the opportunity for students to conduct research on the same issues by submitting assignments and writing a dissertation. This MA course was recently revamped, and new study units created to reflect both the evolution in the research area of islands and small states studies, but also to allow single study units to be followed by the general public, and with the option of providing training to both public and private entities interested in this specific programme.

2.1.2. Master of Arts (Research on Islands and Small States)

This specific blended postgraduate programme was designed with research as the first outcome of a training path that aims at enhancing the knowledge of the students on islands and small states

matters. The course is intended to be interdisciplinary and relates to economic, social, environmental, and political issues associated with islands and small states. The different study units offered by the programme are designed so as to strengthen the capacities of the students to understand and identify the advantages and constraints associated with small country size and insularity. The programme enhances the students' capacities for thinking, reasoning, conceptualising and assessing key theoretical, and applied, aspects relating to islands and small states, thus, additionally, contributing to their intellectual development.

Table 1. Programme of studies of the MA by Research

Study Unit Code	Title	ECTS
ISS5200	Introduction to the Study of Islands and Small States 1: Economic and Environmental Issues	5
ISS5210	Introduction to the Study of Islands and Small States 2: Social and Political Issues	5
ISS5220	Research Methodology	10
ISS5230	Dissertation	70

Students of this programme are required to attend lectures (face-to-face and/or online) at the University for a three-week intense period at the beginning of October, to then be expected to continue with their studies via online platforms provided by the University and properly supervised by lecturers and academic coordinators in this blended journey.

Since the academic year 2018-2019, this MA by Research has been the main programme offered by the ISSI, given its capacity to attract students from abroad, and the strong research component that is also appealing for those students who would like to continue in their doctoral studies.

Table 2. Historical overview of students enrolled in the MA by Research

Academic Year	Students
2018-2019	3
2019-2020	5
2020-2021	5
2021-2022	8
2022-2023	6
2023-2024	6

2.1.3. PhD Programme

The ISSI is proud to offer the only, to date, Doctoral Programme in the world that specialises in islands and small states studies. This programme requires all students who have not graduated from the MA by research offered by our Institute, to follow three preparatory study units (the same offered within the MA by research programme), in order to receive proper training on environmental, economic, social and political aspects of islands and small states. Additionally, students are required to follow a research methodology unit, to sharpen research design and explore research methods through theoretical and practical training offered by ISSI academic personnel.

The ISSI also recognises the excellent work being undertaken by the University of Malta Doctoral School, whereby continuous training opportunities are being offered to all doctoral candidates, and with administrative support to our offices, ensures that the growing student community is well served and prepared for their research.

Table 3. Historical overview of students enrolled in the ISSI Doctoral Programme

Academic Year	Students
2018-2019	0
2019-2020	2
2020-2021	3
2021-2022	7
2022-2023	5
2023-2024	3

During the academic year 2023/24, four international MA students as well as 13 international and one Maltese PhD students were enrolled with the ISSI.

2.2. Testimonials from ISSI Students

Students are at the core of ISSI's mission, and our efforts are always undertaken to ensure that excellent quality, in both the contents of the training and the relations that occur, is provided in a timely and responsible manner.

The testimonials below show the impact that the ISSI has had on the students' path to improve their educational attainments. They are also a testimony of the many positive impacts and inputs that the ISSI was able to receive from all its students.

2.2.1. Testimonials from Master of Arts students

Stacey Alvarez de la Campa



Picture 1. Stacey Alvarez de la Campa, MA by Research Student (2023-2024)

The decision to embark on my studies at the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) of the University of Malta has been life-changing in the best way possible. It has been an incredible blessing to have been awarded a scholarship in the Masters by Research program, and to interact with faculty and staff in a vibrant and intellectually enriching setting.

The course content is based on a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach that truly reflects the intricacies of island economy, ecology, history, and socio-cultural identities. Also of note is the manner in which all of the course facilitators go above and beyond to make themselves accessible and available to answer any questions, as well as to encourage active participation in class discussions. Indeed, these discussions were always skilfully moderated, serving as a memorable and insightful way to catalyse even deeper levels of intellectual inquiry from everyone present.

I continue to benefit both personally and professionally from my experience as a student of ISSI. It was always wonderful to experience the international perspectives shared by my classmates, many of whom have become my friends, and I also gained the confidence to launch my own NGO, called Climate Rights & Justice International. I would not hesitate to recommend the ISSI's Masters by Research Program to anyone who wishes to develop and deepen their expertise in Island Studies.

My research focuses on the climate adaptation practices of Indigenous people of the Eastern Caribbean, specifically those of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I chose this focus because, as a descendant of the Garifuna people, I am deeply concerned by the lack of targeted policies that focus on the specific protection of Indigenous minorities from the onslaught of climate change. I am committed to addressing the lack of meaningful data, as such data is needed to forge the foundation of effective policies. Inasmuch as I am taking into account the challenges faced by Indigenous minorities, my research is not rooted in a revelling in the consequences of victimhood. Rather, I am seeking to empower and elevate communities by beginning the process of filling any data gaps that currently prevent any effective action from being implemented. Ultimately, my work seeks to put an end to the erosion of the unique identity of Indigenous populations and identify the specific needs to be addressed to build infrastructural resilience in the face of the climate crisis.

2.2.2. Testimonials from PhD students

Allanson Winston Timothy Cruickshank



Picture 2. Allanson Cruickshank, Doctoral Student (enrolled in 2021-2022)

Having given a testimonial closer to the start of my programme, I am pleased to give another perspective as I complete the programme. In this one, I will not focus on the coursework and how I got into the programme, but on the research experience. Undertaking a PhD is a potentially life-changing process and, at my time at ISSI has been a very significant period of my life. Balancing a full-time PhD with family life, volunteerism, work and several other endeavours has been challenging. However, my PhD supervisor, Prof. Stefano Moncada, has been very pragmatic in his approach to supervision. Things changed rapidly in terms of my field work and what I was required to do, but we were able to make the necessary adjustments in a timely manner and continue working towards completion. This was invaluable for me. Overall, I think that the programme of study at ISSI is particularly important for the residents of SIDS and their work is globally recognised in this field.

I have also had the support of my PhD classmates, as we often bounced ideas off each other, vented to each other when frustrated and encouraged each other along this journey. Finally, I am grateful to ISSI for their tuition scholarship, which has made completing this programme a reality. I also express gratitude to the AIS Forum for their grant sponsorship, which aided me in completing my field work.

In conclusion, I would encourage persons from islands and small states around the globe, especially in SIDS, to choose ISSI as their first option to conduct research on islands and small states. The invitation is also for those who are not from islands and small states. Let us expand the body of knowledge on these unique locations of global significance.

In terms of my research, my focus was on “Volcanic Risk Reduction in the Face of Multiple Hazards in Caribbean SIDS: Examining St. Vincent and Dominica”. With the intensification of tropical weather systems, associated with climate change, the compound interaction of non-hydrometeorological hazards and hydrometeorological hazards is likely to occur more frequently, as seen in the lahars during the April 2021 explosive eruption of La Soufriere volcano in SVG. Small volcanic islands are especially at risk because of the increased likelihood of human settlements being located in highly exposed areas due to land use pressures.

A sequential, exploratory, mixed method approach was used to collect qualitative (elite interviews and an analysis of DRR and CCA policies in the Caribbean region, Dominica and SVG) and quantitative data via a household questionnaire survey (N=402). The data was analysed using thematic content analysis (NVivo) and various statistical analyses (Stata).

Among the findings were that comprehensive disaster management (CDM) could address DRR and CCA but would require an improvement in inter-agency collaboration. Social capital, land use planning and economic instruments could build resilience to all hazards. Regarding social capital, generally, persons no longer assist in their communities without payment, except during, and immediately after, disasters. This adds a Caribbean island communities' perspective to the current understanding of social capital in Pacific island communities in the literature. Finally, scientific knowledge can be effectively translated into evidence-based DRR and CCA policy and practice by: improving public education; removing partisan political biases in executing DRR and CCA activities; mainstreaming DRR and CCA into the national development process; and, using knowledge brokerage to facilitate improved communication among stakeholders. There was little divergence between both countries in terms of the results, except for a stronger acknowledgement and consideration of non-climate related hazards in SVG than in Dominica.

The thesis advances theoretical knowledge regarding the nexus between volcanic risk reduction and CCA in volcanic SIDS, especially the strategies which can address multiple hazards in this context. This combination has scarcely been examined in the literature previously. The thesis also extends the current body of knowledge on utilising mixed methodologies in dealing with disaster and volcanic risk reduction in concert with CCA. The findings have numerous implications for DRR and CCA policy in volcanic SIDS, especially considering addressing both simultaneously and their compound, cascading and complex effects.

Jwala Rambarran



Picture 3. Jwala Rambarran, Doctoral Student (enrolled in 2023-2024)

“No man is an island.” John Donne’s famous saying captures the serendipitous moment when I came across the doctoral programme of the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) at the University of Malta.

So far, the programme has not only provided me with greater knowledge and understanding of my own home space in the Caribbean region, but also tremendous opportunities for personal growth and development. I had the enviable opportunity to represent ISSI at the Interdisciplinary Workshop on Sustainable Development 2024 at Columbia University.

Learning from world-renowned ISSI lecturers who are genuinely committed to their students' academic journey and the multidisciplinary nature of the courses opened an intellectually fascinating manner of studying about the rich and complex dynamics of islands and small states.

My thesis title is "Innovative Financing for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Tackling the Twin Crises of Debt and Climate Change." This research aims at filling several gaps in the literature, focusing on island studies, debt crises, climate shocks, innovative finance and reform of the global financial architecture to help Caribbean nations break free from their vicious debt-climate trap.

2.3. List of all lecturers teaching with ISSI

The ISSI collaborates with academic staff from several Faculties/School/Institute/Centres based at the University of Malta, and in other key centres overseas, in order to provide the most appropriate expertise in the teaching and in the research areas of our prospective students. The ISSI has one full-time academic placed at the Institute, Prof. Stefano Moncada, and Prof. Briguglio also contributing with a part-time TR4 position. An important contribution towards all the lectures, supervisions and participation to the ISSI boards comes from academic personnel placed in other Faculties/School/Institute/Centres, and without which the ISSI would not be in a position to provide the necessary inputs towards its teaching and research programmes.

The Director and the Chair have repeatedly expressed their gratitude to all those who are contributing. The ISSI has put forward, backed and endorsed by the ISSI Board, a request for additional resident academic staff to be placed at the ISSI, showing that the current load being endured by Dr Moncada and Prof. Briguglio, also considering the projected growing teaching and supervision efforts, perfectly justifies such a request.

The current list of lecturers servicing the ISSI is the following:

- Prof. Stefano Moncada
- Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino
- Prof. Lino Briguglio
- Prof. Patrick J. Schembri
- Mr. Joseph Gauci
- Prof. Saviour Formosa
- Dr George Vital Zammit
- Dr Karl Agius

- Dr Michael Briguglio
- Prof. Jack Corbett
- Dr Glorianne Camilleri
- Dr Margaret Camilleri Fenech
- Dr Francesco Sindico
- Dr Pedro Pombo

2.3.1. Testimonials from ISSI academics

Prof. Lino Briguglio



Picture 4. Prof. Lino Briguglio, former Director of the ISSI and senior fellow, academic year 2023-2024

I formed part of the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) since its birth in the early 1990s, originally located at the Foundation for International Studies in Valletta and, since 2007, at the Tal-Qroqq campus.

I was its director for 28 years, and saw it growing from a simple research institution, expanding its remit by organising a series of international conferences, acting as consultant to various international organisations, and offering post-graduate courses.

In recent years, under the direction of Prof. Stefano Moncada, the Institute has enhanced its reputation world-wide and has continued to expand its activities in matters relating to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly on issues relating to climate change. I think the expression “punching above one's weight” fits very well in the case of the ISSI, as it has achieved results and successes much more than expected of a small institute.

Contributing to the Islands and Small States postgraduate programme for the past five years has been a pleasure and honour. It has been particularly interesting to share experiences from across the world, due to the multinational student participation.

Prof. Ing. Charles Yousif



Picture 5. Prof. Ing. Charles Yousif, Board member for the academic year 2023-2024

As a Scholar of Repute appointed by the University of Malta's Senate in the Board of the Islands and Small States Institute for the past eight years, I have participated in and witnessed the significant growth of the students' cohort at Masters and Doctorate levels, thanks to the dedication of the whole management team headed by the Institute's Director Prof. Stefano Moncada.

The promotion of interdisciplinary academic research for islands and small states has remained the central focus of the Institute, which yields valuable outcomes and addresses many gaps in research, especially for small island developing states (SIDS).

In line with the Institute's aims, a large number of events and conferences have been organised from book launches to climate change symposia and online seminars. Peer-reviewed publications have continued to be published many of which have achieved high citation numbers.

The Institute has continued to expand its networking with other European and international entities, especially focusing on SIDS and this has brought worldwide recognition of the Institute's role in all areas of studies within islands and small states.

Prof. Jack Corbett



Picture 6. Prof. Jack Corbett, honorary lecturer for the academic year 2023-2024

It is a great privilege to be an honorary lecturer at ISSI. The students are fantastic, and it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to teach topics directly relevant to my research.

As a scholar who focuses on the politics and development of small island states, I have only rarely been able to teach my own work across my career.

But ISSI provides an important platform for our community to speak directly to those students interested in the issues I care about.

2.4. Visiting scholars

The ISSI also collaborates with a number of international scholars, for teaching and learning experiences, to provide public lectures on issues pertaining to island and small states, and for joint research initiatives. The Institute is truly grateful to its international collaborators for sharing their expertise and perspectives with its staff, students and ISSI's wider community.

2.4.1 Prof. Rebecca Hamilton



Picture 7. Prof. Rebecca Hamilton, visiting lecturer during the academic year 2023-2024

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the ISSI had the pleasure of hosting Prof. Rebecca Hamilton, professor of law at the American University Washington College of Law, who received a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program award from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Scholarship Board.

During her stay at the Institute, Prof. Hamilton conducted research and taught International Law, working with graduate students from small island developing states from the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean. As Prof. Hamilton explained, there is a growing need to prepare students for the climate dimension in all areas of law. In her research titled 'Digital Life and Climate Survival', Professor Hamilton explores the growing conflicts between the technology industry, which aims to reduce the importance of physical location, and climate activists who emphasise the significance of specific places.

Among other initiatives, in March 2024, Prof. Hamilton held a webinar titled "Criminalizing Ecocide: Promise and Peril", as part of the ISSI's series of webinars and seminars on topics related to islands and small states.

Furthermore, in the summer of 2024, Prof. Hamilton conducted her first ever marathon swim from Switzerland to France across Lake Geneva, in order to help raise funds in support of the Maltese environmental NGO Żibel, with the aim to purchase an ocean plastics machine.

2.4.2 Dr Carola Klöck



Picture 8. Dr Carola Klöck, visiting lecturer during the academic year 2023-2024

In May 2024, the ISSI was visited by Dr Carola Klöck, assistant professor in political science at the Center for International Studies (CERI) of the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po). In 2013, she obtained her PhD from ETH Zurich and then held positions at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden), the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and the University of Göttingen (Germany). Dr Klöck was also visiting scholar at the Australian National University (in 2016) and at the University of the South Pacific on its Laucala Campus in Fiji (2018).

Dr Klöck's research is located at the interface of political science, human geography and development studies, and examines adaptation to climate change, and the politics of climate change more generally. The role of these states in international climate negotiations is also of interest to her.

In mid-May, Dr Klöck delivered the last seminar in ISSI's series of the academic year 2023/24, titled "UN climate negotiations: challenges, strategies, successes".

3. Research at the Islands and Small States Institute

The ISSI proudly hosts two research platforms (Climate, Tourism), as well as the WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States, which represent a crucial part of our research activities and places the ISSI as a centre of excellence for those broad research areas, contributing both to academia and policy.

3.1. WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States

Following the redesignation in 2021, the ISSI continued to work as the World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policies in Small States. Thanks to its notable track record of top-level policy research on resilience, economy, environment and health in small states, the Institute had first been designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre in 2017, during the 4th High-level Meeting of Small Countries held on 26th and 27th June 2017.

In collaboration with the WHO, the Institute is working on three main topics: (i) the development of policy recommendations on building health-system resilience in small states; (ii) the interrelationship between tourism, health systems and sustainability, with a focus on islands and small countries, through a planetary health and equity approach; and (iii) the development of a toolkit on health information, digital health and evidence generation in small states.

3.2. Climate Change Platform

Established in 2016, the main objectives of the Climate Change Platform (CCP) are to facilitate collaboration between University of Malta entities and individual academics interested in climate change issues, and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change. The CCP is guided and overseen by a Steering Committee chaired by Prof. Simone Borg (outgoing), with Prof. Maria Attard as vice-chair, and Prof. Charles Galdies as the CCP focal point. The other members of the Committee are Prof. Lino Briguglio, Prof. Stefano Moncada, Prof. Paul J. Pace and Dr Ing. Charles Yousif. The CCP continued to lead several consultation processes among University of Malta academics, collecting and collating feedback to key climate change and energy proposed legislation, and to this end submitted comments to government authorities when carrying out consultation initiatives.

3.3. Island Tourism Platform

The Island Tourism Platform (ITP) was set up in 2017, as a collaborative project between the Islands and Small States Institute and the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture (ITTC). Its main objectives are to facilitate collaboration between University of Malta entities and individual academics interested in island tourism issues and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to island tourism at the University of Malta and elsewhere.

The ITP is administered and guided by a Steering Committee composed of Dr Marie Avellino (Director of the ITTC) as chair, Prof. Lino Briguglio (member of the ISSI) as vice-chair of the ITP and co-ordinator, and Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino, Prof. George Cassar, Dr Marie Louise Mangion, and Ms Elly Iussa (student representative) as members. The work of the Steering Committee is facilitated by Dominik Kalweit, Research Support Officer at the ISSI.

One outcome of the collaboration between the ISSI and the ITTC, through the ITP, was the publication of three studies relating to overtourism and environmental governance, all authored by Prof. Briguglio and Dr Avellino. The first is a 2019 article titled *Has overtourism reached the Maltese Islands?* (2019, *Occasional Papers on Islands and Small States* ISSN 1024-6282, Issue: 2019/01), and the other two are chapters in books namely “Overtourism, Environmental Degradation and Governance in Small Islands with Special Reference to Malta” (Chapter 17 in *Shaping the Future of Small Islands*, Palgrave Macmillan (2020)), and “Assessing Malta’s Overtourism” (Chapter 10 in *Managing Events, Festivals and the Visitor Economy: Concepts, Collaborations and Cases*, Cabi (2021)).

Another outcome of the setting up of the ITP is the introduction by the ITTC of a study unit titled “Island Tourism”, at the undergraduate and Master’s levels. In these study units, the special characteristics of small islands are highlighted, leading to relatively high economic benefits and also to environmental degradation, given the limited carrying capacity and the fragile ecosystem of many small islands. The successful collaboration between the ISSI and the ITTC has therefore led to beneficial initiatives, more of which are being planned. More information is available on the ITP’s website.



Pictures 9 and 10. Organisers and participants of the workshop to draw up a set of strategic directions for sustainable tourism in the Maltese Islands

On 27 October 2023, between 9h and 13h, the ITP held a “workshop to draw up a set of strategic directions for sustainable tourism in the Maltese Islands” for interested academics at the University of Malta. The event aimed at drawing up a document for the attention of the government and other tourism stakeholders, proposing strategic directions for Malta to pursue a sustainable-tourism path. It provided an opportunity for university academics from various disciplines to participate in this process.

3.4. MA by Research students who graduated in 2023/24

The research below is the result of the 30,000-word dissertation that the ISSI student delivered at the end of the academic year 2023-2024. Some of the research summarised below is being presented at international conferences and in the process of being submitted to international journals.

3.4.1. Stacey Alvarez de la Campa – ‘Integrating Indigenous knowledge and community-based climate change adaptation in Eastern Caribbean Big Ocean Striving States (Boss): The case of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’

Climate adaptation practices have been carried out by Indigenous people throughout the world for millennia (Dent et al., 2023), and it has been established that they possess crucial, experiential knowledge that can form an essential aspect of equitable and sustainable climate adaptation planning and policymaking (Byskov & Hymas, 2022). While the Earth’s climate was not changing with the rapidity it is currently, nor was it anthropomorphically driven to the same extent that it is today, these changes were nonetheless handled by Indigenous populations as part of their evolving connection to the landscapes they inhabited. This connection is a manifestation of a relationship that has been described as loving, reciprocal, interdependent, and familial (Galway, et al., 2022).

This was especially the case of Indigenous people who inhabited what are traditionally referred to as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Hofman et al., 2021), but what this paper will refer to as Big Ocean Striving States (BOSS).

Against the backdrop of island landscapes, and as a result of specific aspects of geographic isolation and the resulting effects on ecology and biodiversity, the Indigenous inhabitants of BOSS have been attuned to signs of change and evolution and developed their specific adaptation practices to cope. Therefore, Indigenous and community-based adaptation practices play a crucial role in building climate resilience (Middelbeek et al., 2014), and such practices are endorsed by formal bodies such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2019) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2022). This research examines the extent to which Eastern Caribbean regional and local perspectives reflect international attitudes to the integration of Indigenous and community-based climate adaptation practices, and how such integration will benefit the Indigenous population, with a specific emphasis on the territory of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

3.5. MFET and UM Scholarships in Islands and Small States Studies – Students’ testimonials

3.5.1. *Rickie Morain*



Picture 11. Rickie Morain (Grenada), MA by research student (2023-2024)

I am very pleased to be enrolled in the MA in Islands and Small States at UM. This comprehensive programme provided us the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the various social, environmental, economic and political vulnerabilities that small islands states uniquely experience. It further equipped us with the necessary methodological research tools and techniques needed to effectively conduct literature review and further research in our various interest areas.

The sum of the parts exceeded the whole in my cohort by benefitting from the rich interactions, debates and experiences shared among colleagues from SIDS all over the world. I have the greatest appreciation for all the lecturers, guest speakers and administrative staff who facilitated this amazing program.

The tiny Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) islands share an ocean space that is hundreds of times larger than their combined land masses, the latter which have been traditionally overexploited in the production of agriculture crops for the export market, and more recently, are crammed with mainly unplanned and under-regulated tourism, fisheries and recreational facilities along the coast.

The Sustainable Development discourse of Small Islands States (SIDS) now present a golden opportunity to address this concern. My research therefore focuses on investigating the avenues and mechanisms through which renewable energy solutions can be integrated in the management of the blue economy and to examine the budgetary support allocated by the various islands of the sub region in this regard.

3.6. UM Scholarships in Islands and Small States Studies – Students’ testimonials

3.6.1. *Ifeanyi Godwin Clement*



Picture 12. Ifeanyi Godwin Clement, MA by research student (2023-2024)

Awesome and Rich! Those words encapsulate my experience in this programme. I have always enjoyed research and teaching, so I knew I wanted to follow a programme that will prepare me adequately for this purpose.

Since this was a Master by research, lots of emphasis was placed on developing my research skills through quality teaching and excellent supervision provided at the institute. Most paramount was the excellent supervision and guide provided by Prof. Stefano Moncada. I am an improved researcher, when compared to when I started the programme, with great analytical and communication skills, thanks to the mentoring provided by my supervisor.

My research focuses on “Climate change adaptation and the role of civil society organisations in the Mediterranean region: The case of Malta”. For climate adaptation programmes to succeed in most states, there is the need to build a concerted effort in the formulation and implementation of adaptation policies and strategies. This is why the role of civil society organisations in climate governance is crucial.

By conducting expert interviews and adopting a qualitative content analysis, this research examines key government documents on climate change, to evaluate to what extent civil society organisations are involved in design and implementation climate change adaptation in Malta. Results reveal a lack of effective NGO involvement in climate policy co-designing thereby losing valuable public inputs in the policies.

3.7. PhD research students and themes

3.7.1. Ben Biedermann - 'Disseminating Technocratic Narratives: Public policies on digital infrastructure in small jurisdictions'

This research, titled “Disseminating Technocratic Narratives: Public policies on digital infrastructure in small jurisdictions”, analyses digital identity projects in small jurisdictions and evaluates their relevance for defining digital infrastructure under conditions of smallness. Roads, parliamentary buildings, and hospitals are examples for public infrastructure that also highlight that infrastructure cannot be infinitely downsized, a problem of relevance to small jurisdictions. Electronic passports, software, and data centres are digital infrastructure, but what differentiates digital infrastructures from physical ones? Digital identity offers an interesting perspective on answering this question by connecting contemporary issues of small societies, such as statehood, the role of technology, and market regulation.

3.7.2. Marie Stéphanie Perrine - 'Climate Change Adaptation among coastal communities in Small Islands Developing States: The case of adaptive capacity in Rodrigues'

In SIDS, older generations lived with basic materials and resources, but could organise, cope, adapt and survive natural disasters and the worst of climatic events to secure their livelihoods. While Traditional and Local Knowledge (TLK) strengthened their resilience, SIDS' contemporary portrayal as epitome of vulnerability, is quite contrasting. The research titled “Climate Change Adaptation among coastal communities in Small Islands Developing States: The case of adaptive capacity in Rodrigues” aims at filling the theoretical gap on and provide empirical evidence of how climate change adaptation, TLK and adaptive livelihood capacity interact in the context of the Indian Ocean's SIDS.

3.7.3. Colin Mattis - 'Climate Change Adaptation Frameworks and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Small Island Developing States'

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) has been identified as an essential policy response to the negative impacts of climate change. While most of the adaptation research has focused on responses and strategies that are implemented by the public sector and large multinational companies, there is a gap in knowledge on how Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) are adapting, and whether suitable theoretical frameworks exist to accommodate the specific needs of MSMEs in the context of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The methodology for this study involved a mixed method approach, including a systematic literature review (Prisma), qualitative (elite interviews) and quantitative analysis (surveys) to assess the extent to which MSMEs are involved in CCA within SIDS, and the extent to which the policies of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) SIDS contain instruments that seek to involve MSMEs in adaptation activities.

This research will contribute to closing the adaptation gap by providing policy makers and decision makers with clear guidance, knowledge and tools that they need to enhance national adaptation planning. The research will also facilitate the development of climate change adaptation concepts and theories, especially relating to policy frameworks that seek to spur MSME involvement in climate

action. Methodologically, the research proposes a framework, inclusive of systematic literature review, content analysis, qualitative analysis tools (such as NVIVO-14) and policy assessment methods, which can be used to investigate stakeholder involvement in climate action as part of research projects. Most importantly, the research aims at informing climate change adaptation policy and practice, especially relating to the involvement of MSMEs within SIDS.

3.7.4. Jean Alcindor – A Socio-economic Analysis of the Agricultural Sector in the Small Island States of the Indian Ocean: Implications for Education and Training Development in Seychelles

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and lately between Israel and Hamas, the global economy has been hit severely especially in the tourism and agriculture sectors. The small island states of the Indian Ocean such as Seychelles and Mauritius which are being studied in this exploratory research, are no exception, given their high dependency on tourism and importation of food, fuel, labour, raw materials and other commodities. These challenges have contributed to a sharp decline in Foreign Direct Investment, GDP growth and export volumes of these islands, as well as disrupted regional and global supply chain. The heavy blow to these islands' tourism sector has brought about a myriad of socio-economic and political challenges which call for a rethinking of their current macroeconomic and fiscal policies and strategies. Although these islands are economically vulnerable, agricultural policy reform and restructuring is seen as a major strategic option of the on-going economic diversification process. Yet, both of these islands are exposed to exogenous shocks which have a strong impact on cost of food production. To revive the agricultural sector of these islands is a challenging task; but many, largely untapped, opportunities exist. This can be optimised if the agricultural sector is modernised through the use of science and technology. However, to cope and sustain such an innovation, there is a need to simultaneously revamp the education and training sector through human capital investment. It is on this premise that the main research hypothesis of this PhD is that, with a vibrant and robust TVET system in place, Seychelles would be in a stronger position to supply a competent workforce to ensure the vitality and resilience of its agricultural sector, which will then better support a sustainable economic recovery and further growth. Hence, in this study a constructivist paradigm, through a mixed research methodology using PESTLE Analysis of the food systems of small island states is being employed (a) to find out what are the current socio-economic factors influencing the development of agriculture and their impacts on education and training in Mauritius, and; (b) what are their implications for further development of education and agricultural training in Seychelles?

3.8. Research projects

3.8.1 SUNRISE - 'Situating Understanding of Resilience in Island Societies and Environments'

The ISSI is a partner in the project 'SUNRISE: Situating Understanding of Resilience in Island Societies and Environments', led by Birkbeck, University of London and financed by the UK NERC Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund (GPSF). Other partners are the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of the West Indies, and the University of Mauritius.

Through the establishment of an international, interdisciplinary collaboration on island climate resilience, SUNRISE aims to address the following issues:

1. Approaches used in global and regional climate impact assessments are often poorly suited to relatively small islands and, especially, atoll countries, given the fundamental mismatches in the spatial scales of knowledge creation and decision-making/action.
2. While the impact of climate change on island places is widely studied, far less attention has been given to the impacts of climate change on the fundamental characteristics of 'islandness', or the consequences of these impacts as transnational and internal interdependence shifts in response to climate and non-climate forcing.

By applying their complimentary skills and expertise, the research team works on developing innovative approaches that overcome these empirical and conceptual gaps around how islandness is accounted for in data and methodological approaches typically used in climate impact assessments. SUNRISE will then pilot novel approaches to explore climate impacts and resilience in contexts which are not usually compared, including North Atlantic and Pacific islands. In doing so, SUNRISE will seek to situate varied, individual examples of place-based climate impacts and resilient practice within the wider context of small islands. This collaboration has already managed to produce some tangible results, by publishing a special issue in the *Small States and Territories Journal* (out November 2021), a research paper in the prestigious climate change journal *Wires*, and an already highly cited paper entitled 'Understanding Islandness'.

3.8.2 Beyond Pandemics

The project "Beyond Pandemics: Improving climate resilience and health systems in small island states" received the Research Excellence Award in December 2021, financed by the University of Malta's Internal Research Grants Programme, started in March 2022 and was finalised during the Academic Year 2023/24. This project aims to identify existing climate and public health risks, as well as resilience-building measures, in Small Island States (SIS), often disproportionately impacted by external shocks. A crisis like Covid-19 highly impacted the socioeconomic fabric of many SIS, in many instances already challenged by limited financial capacity and infrastructure, long supply chains and looming climate change scenarios. The project employs a mixed-methods approach inclusive of participatory focus groups, elite interviews, and household surveys, to assess health systems in the two small island states of Malta and Mauritius, investigating factors capable of increasing both climate and health resilience. The project also explores the adoption of a Planetary Health Approach, which uses a systematic perspective to link the environment and health systems to proactively overcome external shocks.

The project positions itself in a growing area of research: that of resilience of climate and health systems in a post-pandemic world. The current uncertainties over the effectiveness of climate and public health measures undertaken by authorities to enhance resilience, gives to this project a high relevance and a strong innovation component. The objective to create a map of effective responses to climate and health crises in SIS is valuable to national governments, with the potential of guiding policy locally. Internationally, this project also seeks to meet an overarching objective to support the work of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre (WHO-CC) in Health Systems and Policies

in Small States, hosted by the ISSI of the University of Malta, and that of the Small States Health Platform and Climate Change Platform of the UM.

3.8.3. Horizon Europe: MEDiverSEAty - In quest of the human dimensions of MEDiterranean Marine Biodiversity (HORIZON-MSCA-2022-DN-01)

MEDiverSEAty is a European Doctoral Network investigating the human dimensions of Mediterranean Marine Biodiversity. Despite ongoing efforts to conserve Mediterranean biodiversity, there remains a pressing need for more effective implementation of existing conservation measures. MEDiverSEAty proposes integrating the human dimension into biodiversity studies and conservation strategies to address this challenge. Recognising the significant scientific and social relevance of these dimensions, the project emphasises areas such as marine citizen science, maritime spatial planning, marine heritage, and the economic values of marine biodiversity.

MEDiverSEAty seeks to advance the international discourse by translating this multifaceted perspective into concrete actions, policies and strategies. A critical observation is the absence or oversimplification of 'diversity' (in terms of cultures, roles, societies, attitudes, identities) as a crucial factor influencing Europeans' relationship with marine biodiversity in current political and scientific discussions.

To bridge these gaps, MEDiverSEAty is launching a Doctoral Network Training and Research Program. This program, involving partners from six European countries (Italy, Malta, France, Spain, Montenegro and Greece), focuses on two pillars essential to contemporary marine sciences, policies, and education: Ocean Literacy and Marine Biodiversity Conservation.

3.8.4. Vulnerability and Resilience Framework

For a number of years, under leadership of the Institute's former Director, Prof. Lino Briguglio, the ISSI has been working on the Vulnerability and Resilience Framework, which tries to answer the question as to why, in spite of their economic vulnerability, many small island states succeed economically. Their studies found that many small states assign major importance to policies that enable them to withstand their economic vulnerability by building economic resilience. The Framework is being referred to by many international organisations, particularly the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in their studies and policy reports relating to small states, to argue that these states need to be supported to enable them to strengthen their economic governance for resilience-building purposes.

As part of this ongoing research project, Prof. Briguglio and Dr Moncada are planning research papers that aim to update the vulnerability and resilience indices with the most recent data.

3.8.5. ECO-HERITAGES: Cultural heritage to advance island states' sustainability

Small Island States (SISs), Small Island Developing States (SIDSs) and Sub-National Island Jurisdictions (SNIJs) are all characterised by small size, remoteness and exposure to climate change, such as sea-level rise, impacting their economies and societies. The EU-funded ECO-HERITAGES project

investigates the role that cultural heritage plays in advancing local economic development and social and environmental resilience in Malta (SIS), Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles (SIDSs) and the French island territories of Reunion and Mayotte (SNIJs). The project combines anthropology, heritage, environment, development and island studies to integrate institutional heritagisation processes and indigenous knowledge systems in actions for sustainable futures.

This research project, funded by the European Commission under its Horizon Europe programme, investigates the role of cultural heritages in promoting local economic development and social and environmental resiliences, in the context of Small Island States (SIS), Small Island and Developing States (SIDS) and Sub- National Island Jurisdictions (SNIJs) located in Europe, the African continent and in the Indian Ocean. Small islands are extremely vulnerable to climate change due to their small size and exposure to sea level rise, affecting their social and economic development. Crossing anthropology, heritage, environment, development and island studies, this research aims at integrating institutional heritagisation processes and indigenous knowledge systems in actions for sustainable futures.

This project is hosted by the Islands and Small States Institute (ISSI) of the University of Malta, one of the few European entities in island studies and insular development, and supervised by Prof. Stefano Moncada, specialist in development economics, climate change and sustainable development, and by Professors Lino Briguglio and Godfrey Baldacchino, world leading scholars in small states and islands studies. Addressing the challenges, at European and global level, of informing effective responses to mitigate social, economic and ecological consequences of climate change, this project will focus on the SIS of Malta, the SIDS of Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles and the SNIJs of the French island territories of Reunion and Mayotte.

Through an innovative interdisciplinary methodology, this research contributes with ethnography and cultural studies to sustainable development theories and brings socio-economic resilience analyses to heritage studies. This research will contribute, overall, to the role of Malta and of SIS in the UN actions for Sustainable Development, the EU Development and Cooperation actions and the Missions of the Horizon Europe 2021-2027 Framework.

4. Publications

The publications listed below are an extract of the most significant publications of some of the academic staff based at, or who collaborate with, the ISSI.

4.1. Prof. Frank Bezzina

Journal Articles

- Cassar, J., Bezzina, F. & Borg, C. (Eds.) (2024). *IPS Journal Issue 6: May 2024*. Institute for the Public Service.
- Cassar, V., Tracz-Krupa, K., & Bezzina, F. (2024). The influence of culture, competence, and style of decision-making on evidence-based management in Poland. *Central European Management Journal*, Early Cite, available at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/cemj-11-2023-0442/full/pdf>.

4.2. Dr Pedro Pombo

Book chapters

- Pombo, Pedro, 2024. “Porous futures in Indian Ocean Africa: Oceanic flows and insular socio-ecologies in Mauritius”. In Gupta, Pamila and Caio Simões de Araujo (eds), *Regional Drift. Remapping Africa’s Southern Oceans*, London, Routledge.
<https://www.routledge.com/Regional-Drift-Remapping-Africas-Southern-Oceans/Gupta-deAraujo/p/book/9781032727882>
- Pombo, Pedro, 2024. “Afro-Indic Archipelagos: Searching for African heritages in the materialities, visual cultures and art practices of the Western Indian Ocean islands”, In Fendler, Ute and Yongkyu Chang (eds), *Asia-Africa – Multifaceted Engagement in the Contemporary World*. Singapore, Palgrave Macmillan: 77-99.
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-97-0696-9_5

4.3. Prof. Stefano Moncada

Journal Articles

- Cruickshank, AWT; Moncada, S; Thomas, A. (2024). A Systematic Review of Community-based Volcanic Risk Reduction and Adaptation to the Compound and Cascading Impacts of Climate Change in Volcanic SIDS. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Volume 114, November 2024, 104995. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2024.104995>

- Doorga, J.R.S., Bernardie-Tahir, N., Deenapanray, P.N.K., Dindoyal, Y., Mycoo, M., and Moncada, S. (2024). "Surging seas, rising sea levels, and sinking communities: The urgent need for climate adaptation in small island states." *Environmental Science & Policy* 157 (2024): 103788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2024.103788>
- Moncada, S.; Nguyen, L. (2024) Improving Sustainability, Climate Resilience and Pandemic Preparedness in Small Islands: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability* 2024, 16, 550. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16020550>
- Moncada, S. (2024). Small Island States - Stronger by Design. *IPS Journal*. Issue 4. May 2024. Institute for Public Service: Malta.
- Biedermann, B. & Moncada, S. (2024). Islands unchained: The case of regulating virtual financial assets in Malta. *Small States & Territories Journal* 7(1), pp 75-94

4.4. Small States and Territories Journal (SST)

Small States and Territories (SST) is a scholarly, open-access journal dedicated exclusively to the study of the nature and workings of islands, small sovereign states (however defined) and non-sovereign territories. Launched in 2018, SST has its institutional home at the Islands and Small States Institute. Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino is the editor in chief. The journal is nested within the University of Malta website at: www.um.edu.mt/sst

Vol. 6, No. 2 was published in November 2023, and it included a Special Section on “The epoch of Queen Elizabeth II: Continuity and rupture in small states and territories”. The guest editorial was penned by Sarah Grey and Peter Clegg, offering an overview of the legacy of Queen Elizabeth’s 70-year reign and the challenges facing her successor. Four articles dealing with the Crown Dependencies, subnational jurisdictions, their autonomy, self-determination and legislative powers of Governors and decolonisation make up the special section. The regular section included two articles, one on the political landscape following the general election in Jersey and the other on Greenland’s participation in UN climate negotiations. The issue also presented reviews of four books.

Vol. 7, No. 1 was published in May 2024 with a Special Section on “Security Challenges of Small States”, in which authors examine various challenges surrounding small states, including the role of smallness in conflict environments, migratory trends, human trafficking, youth delinquency, and economic security. Another five articles in the regular section deal with various issues, among which an analysis of the contribution of the journal itself to small state studies, issue-attention cycles in the media, post-Brexit Gibraltar, and constitutions. The regular book review section presented analyses on nine books.

All queries and manuscripts to be considered for publication are to be addressed to: sst@um.edu.mt

4.5. Occasional Papers

The Occasional Series in Islands and Small States Studies has been active since 1994. During the period under review, the following paper was published:

“Proposed strategic directions for the promotion of sustainable tourism in Malta” authored by Marie Avellino; Lino Briguglio; George Cassar; Charles Galdies; Dominik Kalweit; and Marie Louise Mangion.

The objective of the document was to propose a set of strategic directions for Malta in the quest for sustainable tourism which is defined by the UN Environment Programme and UN World Tourism Organization as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and the host communities.” This implies that a strategy for sustainable tourism should address economic, environmental and social concerns for the current and future generations. One cannot therefore ignore issues that will impact future contexts and consequently future societies. This calls for a coordinated approach across policy fields. Given Malta’s sensitivities, the attainment of sustainable tourism is paramount. This necessitates making choices about the type of tourism activity that best suits the country not only in the short term but also in the long term. This implies coordinated decision-making in different policy fields that looks at the whole value chain: commencing from starting up, the investment and the operational cycle, the resulting impacts, as well as the markets and tourist profiles that Malta seeks to attract. In this document reference is made to the need to attract quality tourists. This term refers to discerning tourists who care for and respect the host community, its culture and its physical environment, and recognise the value of and accept to pay the right price for what is experienced in the host destination.

5. Outreach and Communication

In this section the ISSI's main outreach and communication activities are listed, and links to the specific events provided. The ISSI tries to publicise both its events and those organised by colleagues in Malta and outside, with the aim of increasing the visibility of islands and small states studies.

5.1. Webinars

During the Academic Year 2023/24, the ISSI held three seminars and webinars, including a full-day in-person event, on a vast array of topics and with a diverse group of speakers.

In collaboration with the Hitotsubashi University, the ISSI organised a full-day seminar on 14th November 2023, titled “**Linking Japan and Malta through research**”.

The seminar featured presentations and discussions on four topics. On the subject “**Islands diplomacy, vulnerability and resilience**”, Godfrey Baldacchino presented on “the archipelago of Japan: border conversations”. Dr Moncada discussed a comparative analysis on “economic, social and environmental vulnerability and resilience profile of Japan”.

A view on the “**Maltese society from a Japanese perspective**” was first presented by Kuniko Fujiwara, who discussed “proliferation through legends variations: the evolution of objects and places related to Ta' Pinu National Shrine”, before Aya Sadamatsu spoke about the “comparison and background of women's unpaid work in Japan and Malta”.



L-Università ta' Malta
Islands & Small States Institute



Full-day Seminar: *Linking Japan and Malta through research*

📅 14th November 2023 | 9h-17h CET, University of Malta, IT Services, Room VC101

✓ Seminar registration: <https://shorturl.at/bnBW5>
To join virtually: <https://shorturl.at/ryzX7> (Zoom)

This full-day event will feature presentations and discussions on four topics: *islands diplomacy, vulnerability and resilience; Maltese society from the Japanese perspective; a historic perspective on Malta and Japan; and understanding each other's perceptions and attitudes.*

Speakers: Godfrey Baldacchino, Stefano Moncada, Kuniko Fujiwara, Aya Sadamatsu, Nobuo Misawa, Hiroshi Kato, Yuki Tanaka, Miki Iida, Lino Briguglio, Marie Briguglio

Hosted by Dr Stefano Moncada, Director of the ISSI, and Prof. Hiroshi Kato, Mediterranean Studies Group, Hitotsubashi University



Picture 13. Poster for the full-day seminar on “Linking Japan and Malta through research”

The third section of the seminar focused on “**Malta and Japan: A Historic Perspective**”. In this session, Nobuo Misawa presented the “Japanese strategy with Malta in the interwar period”, whilst Hiroshi Kato spoke about the “economic expansion of Japan into Malta in the interwar period”.

The fourth and last session looked at “**Malta and Japan: understanding each other’s perceptions and attitudes**”. Yuki Tanaka presented on “Malta’s representation in Japan: the problem of the one-dimensional image created of ‘Gem of the Mediterranean’”; Miki Iida on “the potential of the history of Mediterranean world and Malta in Japanese university education”; Lino Briguglio discussed the “attitude of the Maltese toward Japan and its people”, and Marie Briguglio asked “How’s Life? A comparison of wellbeing in Malta and Japan”.

The presentations, which were also live-streamed, were followed by a discussion. The event was hosted by Dr Moncada and Professor Hiroshi Kato of the Mediterranean Studies Group of Hitotsubashi University.

In the seminar and webinar titled “**Criminalizing Ecocide: Promise and Peril**”, held on 13th March 2024, Professor Hamilton presented her article on the topic which argues to invest time in grappling with hard questions about what exactly the harm is that ecocide seeks to vindicate which, in turn, requires determining how best to conceptualise the relationship that humans have with the natural environment. It draws on normative debates from within the environmental literature regarding the value of nature and contextualises this discussion within the emerging jurisprudence on human rights and the environment. The Article contends that if the proposed legal definition of ecocide is codified as an international crime, it risks being used to prosecute those who are already marginalised, while reinforcing the artificial (and damaging) conceptual separation of humans from nature that is already entrenched in international law.



L-Università ta' Malta
Islands & Small States Institute

Seminar/Webinar: "Criminalizing Ecocide: Promise and Peril"

📅 13th March 2024 | 3pm to 4.30pm CET

📍 Venue: UM Msida Campus, IT Services, Room VC102

Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/criminalizing-ecocide>



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@UMislands



@ummalta



A conversation with
Professor Rebecca Hamilton

The push to make ecocide an international crime is gaining traction, and no wonder in the face of a climate emergency in which existing legal tools feel insufficient. But what can international criminalization achieve, and what are the risks involved?

Picture 14. Poster for the webinar on “Criminalizing Ecocide: Promise and Peril”

Nonetheless, there is a window of opportunity, currently open, to embed within the ecocide definition a position that understands humans as inseparable from nature, and this position reflects both long-standing Indigenous epistemologies as well as cutting-edge earth science. In her article and presentation, Professor Hamilton proposed that time spent now on re-imagining the normative justification for ecocide's criminalisation could put international criminal law in the rare position of being at the vanguard of a progressive movement to build a greener international law.

Rebecca Hamilton is a 2024 US Fulbright Scholar at the ISSI, working on climate vulnerability and resilience in the context of small island states. She is a Professor of Law at American University, Washington College of Law.

The seminar and webinar on "**UN climate negotiations: challenges, strategies, successes**", held on 15th May, concluded the events of the Academic Year 2023/24. The event focused on the international community's negotiations of a collective approach to climate change, which has been taking place for over thirty years. Small island states such as Malta have been at the forefront of these climate negotiations since the very beginning, although they often struggle to engage meaningfully in, let alone influence, multilateral negotiations. Introducing the UN climate negotiations with a focus on the role of small island states, the seminar discussed how the latter become key players in these negotiations, what challenges they face, the strategies they use and their success.



L-Università ta' Malta
Islands & Small States Institute

Seminar/Webinar on "UN climate negotiations: challenges, strategies, successes"

📅 15th May 2024 | 3pm to 5pm CEST

📍 Venue: UM Msida Campus, Campus Hub CHBO 212

Zoom link: <https://universityofmalta.zoom.us/j/94781231261>



A lecture by
Dr Carola Klöck

The international community has been negotiating a collective approach to climate change for over thirty years. Small island states such as Malta have been at the forefront of these climate negotiations since the very beginning, although they often struggle to engage meaningfully in, let alone influence, multilateral negotiations. How then did islands become key players? What challenges do they face, which strategies do they use, and how successful are they? This presentation will introduce the UN climate negotiations, with a focus on the role of small island states.

Picture 15. Poster for the webinar delivered by Dr Klöck

The talk was delivered by Dr Carola Klöck, assistant professor in political science at the Center for International Studies (CERI) at SciencesPo. Her research is located at the interface of political science, human geography and development studies, and examines adaptation to climate change, and the politics of climate change more generally.

5.2. Articles (newspapers, Newspoint)

During the academic year 2023/2024, the ISSI and its members were featured in a number of news items and outlets, ranging from the University's own Newspoint information portal to national and international publications. Whilst a comprehensive list of article links is found below, here are some highlights:

The ISSI's collaboration with the Government of Malta in developing the Climate Vulnerability and Resilience Index

In December 2023, several news outlets featured the ISSI's development of the Climate Vulnerability and Resilience Index, supported by the Government of Malta. This project was launched in Dubai at the 28th climate conference of the parties, organised by the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) between 30 November and 12 December.

The climate index is supported by the Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFET) and will be developed in cooperation with the Organisation for African Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). The project aims to strengthen the research to refine appropriate metrics to be applicable to a wider array of states and territories, including small island developing states (SIDS). The index builds on the research and work carried out over the last decades by ISSI's former Director Professor Lino Briguglio and, more recently, also by its current Director Dr Moncada.

Following up on his remarks in the Times of Malta's September 2023 article, in his December interview with the same paper, Prime Minister Dr Robert Abela underscored the contribution that Malta can put forward to fellow islands and small states through this multidimensional climate index.

Ref.: <https://timesofmalta.com/article/malta-continue-voice-countries-impacted-rising-sea-levels.1056475>; <https://timesofmalta.com/article/malta-sponsoring-climate-change-research.1070781>; <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2023-12-02/local-news/COP28-Prime-Minister-announces-project-enhancing-climate-change-resilience-in-small-islands-6736256854>; <https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2023/12/climate-vulnerability-and-resilience-index-being-developed-by-the-issi-launched-at-climate-cop28-in-dubai>

On Malta's carrying capacity and issues with over-tourism

Two articles in The Malta Independent, published in May and June 2024, reference Professor Lino Briguglio, and specifically his concerns that Malta has exceeded its carrying capacity in terms of tourism arrivals, and the problems associated with large numbers of tourists exacerbated by disorganised infrastructure and weak traffic management.

Ref.: <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-05-19/local-news/Malta-has-exceeded-its-tourist-carrying-capacity-economist-says-6736261228>; <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-06-20/newspaper-leader/TMID-Editorial-Tackle-over-tourism-before-it-is-too-late-6736262074>

Table 4. List of articles featuring the ISSI

Date	Media	Title	Weblink
15 September 2023	Newspoint	Workshop to draw up a set of strategic directions for sustainable-tourism in the Maltese Islands	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/events/um/2023/10/workshop-on-sustainable-tourism-in-malta#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Malta%20Island,pursue%20a%20sustainable%2Dtourism%20path
21 September 2023	Times of Malta	Malta to continue to be 'voice' of countries impacted by rising sea levels	https://timesofmalta.com/article/malta-continue-voice-countries-impacted-rising-sea-levels.1056475
02 November 2023	Newspoint	Seminar on linking Japan and Malta through research	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/events/um/2023/11/seminar-linking-japan-malta-research
05 November 2023	TVM	Malta one of the few countries where houses are given names	https://tvmnews.mt/en/news/malta-one-of-the-few-countries-where-houses-are-given-names/
23 November 2023	Newspoint	Island and Small States Institute participation at the 7th Adaptation Futures Conference	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2023/11/issi-participation-futures-conference-montreal-um-beyond-pandemics-project
01 December 2023	Times of Malta	Malta sponsoring climate change research	https://timesofmalta.com/article/malta-sponsoring-climate-change-research.1070781
02 December 2023	The Malta Independent	COP28: Prime Minister announces project enhancing climate change resilience in small islands	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2023-12-02/local-news/COP28-Prime-Minister-announces-project-enhancing-climate-change-resilience-in-small-islands-6736256854
11 December 2023	Newspoint	Climate Vulnerability and Resilience Index being developed by the ISSI	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2023/12/climate-vulnerability-and-resilience-index-being-developed-by-the-issi-launched-at-climate-cop28-in-dubai

09 February 2024	The Malta Independent	Climate Action Authority seen as important milestone in transition towards green economy - Ministry	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-02-09/local-news/Climate-Action-Authority-seen-as-important-milestone-in-transition-towards-green-economy-Ministry-6736258476
04 March 2024	Newspoint	Seminar/Webinar: "Criminalising Ecocide: Promise and Peril"	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/events/um/2024/03/webinar-criminalising-ecocide-promise-peril
14 March 2024	Newspoint	Inauguration of the MoU with the University of Cagliari	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/03/inauguration-of-the-mou-with-the-university-of-cagliari
20 March 2024	Times of Malta	Fighting in school 'daily occurrence' for more than third of teens, report says	https://timesofmalta.com/article/fighting-school-daily-occurrence-third-teens-report-says.1089510
21 April 2024	The Malta Independent	Government has failed many people significantly, Bernard Grech says	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-04-21/local-news/Government-has-failed-many-people-significantly-Bernard-Grech-says-6736260416
22 April 2024	Lovin' Malta	Watch: Leading Maltese Economist Warns Food Price Reduction Scheme Is 'Dangerous'	https://lovinmalta.com/news/watch-leading-maltese-economist-warns-food-price-reduction-scheme-is-dangerous/
29 April 2024	Newspoint	MEDAC & ISSI in courtesy call with Hon. E.P. Chet Greene, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua & Barbuda	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/04/medac-issi-courtesy-call-chet-greene
13 May 2024	Newspoint	Collaboration between UM and the Island Province of Hainan, China	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/05/collaboration-between-um-and-the-island-province-of-hainan-china
19 May 2024	The Malta Independent	Malta has exceeded its tourist carrying capacity, economist says	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-05-19/local-news/Malta-has-exceeded-its-tourist-carrying-capacity-economist-says-6736261228

21 May 2024	DNVG (German Society for the United Nations)	Islands in a Global Ocean of Challenges: Navigating towards a Resilient and Sustainable Future for Small Island Developing States	https://dgvn.de/aktivitaeten/einzelseansicht/islands-in-a-global-ocean-of-challenges-navigating-towards-a-resilient-and-sustainable-future-for-small-island-developing-states
05 June 2024	Newspoint	UM present at 4th UN International Conference on Small Island Developing States	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/06/issi-presence-at-sids-4
11 June 2024	JustSecurity.org	Whose Justice? Rohingya Perspectives on Post-Atrocity Justice	https://www.justsecurity.org/95916/rohingya-post-atrocity-justice/
18 June 2024	Newspoint	And the Outstanding PhD Thesis Award for 2024 goes to ...	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/06/outstanding-theses-award-2024
20 June 2024	The Malta Independent	TMID Editorial: Tackle over-tourism before it is too late	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-06-20/newspaper-leader/TMID-Editorial-Tackle-over-tourism-before-it-is-too-late-6736262074
03 July 2024	Newspoint	Adult Continuing Education in Small Island States	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/07/education-small-island-states
04 July 2024	MaltaCEOs.com	New crowdfunding campaign aims to raise €8,000 to help purchase an ocean plastics recycling machine	https://maltaceos.mt/new-crowdfunding-campaign-aims-to-raise-e8000-to-help-purchase-an-ocean-plastics-recycling-machine/
07 July 2024	Times of Malta	Turning the tide on ocean plastic pollution	https://timesofmalta.com/article/turning-tide-ocean-plastic-pollution.1095002
08 July 2024	Newspoint	Turn the Tide on Ocean Plastic Pollution	https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/07/turn-the-tide-on-ocean-plastic-pollution
14 July 2024	The Malta Independent	Economists say government needs courage, strong political will to shift Malta's economic model	https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-07-14/local-news/Economists-say-government-needs-courage-strong-political-will-to-shift

			<u>Malta-s-economic-model-6736262702</u>
15 July 2024	The Malta Independent	TMID Editorial: Changing the economic model isn't easy, but government has to get moving Monday, 15 July 2024, 11:29Last update: about 11 days ago	<u>https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-07-15/newspaper-leader/TMID-Editorial-Changing-the-economic-model-isn-t-easy-but-government-has-to-get-moving-6736262736</u>
17 July 2024	GuideMeMalta.com	Wow! Rebecca Hamilton completes marathon swim across Lake Geneva to support Żibel Malta's ghost net missions	<u>https://www.guidememalta.com/en/wow-rebecca-hamilton-completes-marathon-swim-across-lake-geneva-to-support-ibel-malta-s-ghost-net-missions</u>
19 July 2024	Newspoint	Outcomes of the Fourth Small Islands Developing States Conference	<u>https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2024/07/fourth-small-islands-developing-states-conference</u>

5.3. Social media activities

The Institute continued to publicise and disseminate information about its academic activities and outputs through its social media channels. The articles published in the *Small States and Territories Journal* continued to be disseminated on Thursdays. As from March 2023, Wednesdays showcased each of the chapters of the Routledge *Handbook of Civil Society and Social Movements in Small States*. On Tuesdays, the ISSI gave space to the research that each of its students, at Master's and PhD levels, were undertaking.

ISSI also promoted its postgraduate programmes at relevant points during the year in order to attract more researchers hailing from SIDS and those who have an acute interest in island and small state studies. Moreover, it also used its social media channels to publicise webinars and conferences it organised, as well as other events that featured contributions by its staff.

6. Collaborations

The ISSI actively promotes collaboration with public and private entities to increase visibility and reach of its teaching and research activities, as well as the mainstream of islands and small states studies.

6.1 Collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

6.1.1. Scholarships for ISSI students coming from small island developing states

In 2020, the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Islands and Small States Institute in 2020, affirming the institutions' shared commitment to promote the interests of small states at the local and international level, and to strengthening Malta's central role in this regard. As part of the MoU, the Ministry committed to fund scholarships for students hailing from small states and seeking to further their studies at Institute. During the academic year 2023/24, two ISSI postgraduate students benefited from these scholarships, namely Ms. Juzel Lloyd, from Jamaica, and Ms. Stacey Alvarez de la Campa, from St Vincent and the Grenadines.

6.1.2. Support to the MFET's UN Mission in New York concerning small island developing states (SIDS)

The Islands and Small States Institute has proudly supported the work of Prof. Lino Briguglio who was nominated by the United Nations General Assembly as one of the 11 experts that developed a 'Multidimensional Vulnerability Index', following a prompt by AOSIS and many SIDS to create additional metrics to allocate concessional funding. The ISSI provided Prof. Briguglio with the necessary support to continue the excellent work that Malta, through the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade and Malta's Mission at the UN in New York, has been conducting in the past years.

6.2 Collaboration with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

Dr Moncada was entrusted by the Organisation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) to develop a Multidimensional Vulnerability and Resilience Index to discuss if, and to what extent, parameters associated to vulnerability and resilience are considered within donor institutions, especially in the realm of concessional funding. The OMVRI was developed to first identify key indicators according to economic, social, environmental and political pillars, and then abide by desirable attributes of a composite index, called "STAR", which stands for Simplicity, Transparency, Affordability and Reproducibility.

6.3 Collaboration with the University of Cagliari

The University of Malta, following the initiative taken by the Islands and Small States Institute signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Cagliari Play, in an ad-hoc ceremony

held at the University of Malta in connection to research collaborations on the theme of insularity. The ceremony was attended by the Director of ISSI, who delivered the MoU originally signed by the Rector, Prof. Alfred Vella, and Prof. Aldo Berlinguer, Professor of Law at the University of Cagliari. The two institutions are planning further collaboration in the area of postgraduate supervisions, examination processes, especially Masters and PhD, and consortiums to apply for research grants in the area of sustainability science applied to islands.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of ISSI students and their dissertation titles

MA Students		
Rickie	Claude Morain	<i>The Management of the Blue Economy in the Eastern Caribbean Small Island States: A focus on Grenada</i>
Ifeanyi Godwin	Clement	<i>Climate Change Adaptation and the Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Mediterranean</i>
Osmar Gil Rocha Brigham	Ferro	<i>The performance of the Cruise Tourism industry in St Vincent Island and recommendations for service improvement post Covid-19</i>
Alana	Fiafia Richmond-Rex	<i>Banning single use plastic in small island developing states: Assessing the impact on Niue</i>
Nandini Tanya	Lallmon	<i>Dissonances between policy framework and customary practice in gender equality of Small Island Developing States: The case of LGBTQI+ rights in Mauritius</i>
Marie Michele Audrey	Tolbize Ravina	<i>Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Small Island Developing States: The case of Rodrigues Island</i>
Stacey Natasha	Alvarez De La Campa	<i>Integrating Indigenous and community-based climate change adaptation in Eastern Caribbean small island developing states: The case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines</i>
Berdina Cornelia	Berendse	<i>Recycling plastic practices in the Dutch Kingdom: Contrasting PET usage in the Netherlands and Curacao</i>
Quan	Chen	<i>Citizenship by Investment Schemes from China in the Small Island States of Malta and Antigua: A regulatory perspective</i>
Zena	Kontou	<i>Challenges facing agriculture in Cyprus in the last two decades</i>
Juzel	Lloyd	<i>Overcoming barriers to clean energy sources in Caribbean small island developing states: Jamaica as a case study</i>
PhD Students (1 st year 2023/2024)		
Jwala	Rambarran	<i>Innovative Financing for Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) -Tackling the Twin Crises of Debt and Climate Change</i>
PhD Students (2 nd year 2023/2024)		
Colin	Mattis	<i>Climate Change Adaptation Frameworks and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Small Island Developing States"</i>

Marie Stephania	Perrine	<i>Climate Change Adaptation among coastal communities in Small Islands Developing States: The case of adaptive capacity in Rodrigues'</i>
Ben	Biedermann	<i>Disseminating Technocratic Narratives: Public policies on digital infrastructure in small jurisdictions</i>
Jean	Alcindor	<i>A Socio Economic Analysis of the Agricultural Sector in the Small Island States of the Indian Ocean: Implication for Education and Training Development in Seychelles</i>
PhD Students (3rd year 2023/2024)		
Doris Anna	Atayi	<i>School Counselling in SIDS: The Case of Seychelles</i>
Allanson Winston Timothy	Cruickshank	<i>Volcanic Risk Reduction in the Face of Multiple Hazards in Caribbean SIDS: A focus on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</i>
Claire	Gauci	<i>Building Resilience to Extreme Events in Small Island States Nudging Nutrition</i>
Ruth Julianna	Gutierrez-Corley	<i>The Sustainability of Seaweed Aquaculture for Blue Growth and Climate Change Adaptation in SIDS: The Case of Belize</i>
Angelique Louise Marie	Pouponneau	<i>Legal Instruments to Foster the Blue Economy in Small Island States</i>
Malshini Louendra	Senaratne	<i>Blue Carbon Markets in SIDS: Community Participation and the Case of Seychelles</i>
Jordan Kymani	Williams	<i>Explorations of social suffering and violence in a bipartisan political context: The case of Jamaica</i>
PhD Students (advanced)		
Georges Marc	Nicette	<i>Understanding Lived Experiences of Former Heroin Users in SIDS</i>