

project title: Young Picassos

project subtitle: **Democratising climate change adaptation in the domain of food by engaging children's visions through participatory art**

Department: Human Geography and Spatial Planning

Research group: International Development Studies

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Project description

The food sector is facing major challenges to feed the people in a sustainable way, whilst dealing with major crises such as climate change. In response, there is growing agency to transform our food system entirely towards practices that address climate change through adaptation. However, current structures for climate change adaptation knowledge generation neglect citizen involvement (Wamsler et al., 2020). Moreover, people with 'no voice' in the margins of the food system transformation and climate change adaptation tend not to be included in food policymaking or knowledge creation (Moragues-Faus, 2020). For instance, while children are being considered future leaders whom society expects to overcome the legacies of climate change and food security inaction, they currently have limited opportunities to cultivate, voice, and express their understandings, concerns, and imaginings about these critical subjects. Without the meaningful participation of children, the intended transformation towards more sustainable food practices that address planetary health concerns remains limited in reach, with exclusive sustainability transformations in general being labelled as elitist (Mazel, 2019).

A potentially interesting tool to induce a more inclusive engagement and for harnessing capacities of children with diverse backgrounds and in different roles in climate change adaptation knowledge co-creation is participatory art. Previous research funded by the Pathways to Sustainability SEED grant was conducted at the *Weekend van Wetenschap* (Weekend of Science) event at Utrecht University (October 2025), in which children were encouraged to explore food-based ideas they can adopt to survive suggested climate change-related extreme scenarios. However, the limitation with this exercise was that it attracted mainly Dutch children with no known migration backgrounds. The voices of children with migration backgrounds were missing or under-represented.

Thus, the research assistant will further the agenda of inclusive engagement in food-based climate change adaptation by reflecting on and expanding participatory art as a methodological approach best suited for engaging children with migration backgrounds in building inclusive narratives in food-based climate change adaptation. The research assistant will be expected to coordinate art sessions that generate qualitative data in collaboration with civil society organisations such as schools, community libraries or any other social platforms that bring together youths with migration backgrounds in the Netherlands. The assistant will also analyse the collected data, write a report or policy brief and explore avenues for further research. This experience will improve the research skills of the applicant through methodological sharpness and critical awareness.

Job requirements

- A bachelor's degree in Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Sustainable Development and any other related social science discipline.
- Experience with or an interest in working with children.
- Fluency in Dutch and English is mandatory. An additional international language will be a bonus.
- Great interpersonal skills and a sense of humour.