PhD Proposal in the area of Environmental Peacebuilding

PhD Fee waiver for PhD for up to four years: The School of Applied Social Studies is offering a number of fee waiver scholarships that will commence in September 2017. If successful this would mean that you could obtain your PhD in this subject area without having to pay any fees. Your only costs would be living expenses. Some teaching opportunities may also be available. The current call is restricted to Scottish domiciled students. Details of each proposal are available at: www.rgu.ac.uk/funded-studentship-opportunities

Background

Peace building involves a wide range of practices that are aimed at resolving conflict, reducing violence and ultimately building sustainable forms of peace by addressing the root causes of conflict. Peacebuilding in practice has often involved establishing peace agreements through externally-designed and outsider-driven interventions in national peace processes, particularly by the United Nations. Over the past decade or so, critical peacebuilding scholars have questioning the 'liberal peace' paradigm (MacGinty 2008, Millar 2016), recognising that sustainable peace needs to involve local actors (MacGinty and Richmond 2013). Although this has largely remained conceptual and has at times been hampered by essentialist understandings of ‘the local’ (Pfaffenholz 2015), scholars have examined the hybridity of peace and governance mechanisms (Jarstad and Belloni 2012) and the practices of everyday peace building in divided communities (MacGinty 2014).

In recent years, an interest has emerged – among policy makers, in civil society, and slowly also in the academic arena – in environmental peacebuilding. Environmental peacebuilding examines the role of environmental factors in moving towards sustainable peace. It emphasises that environmental problems can undermine livelihoods, which fuels grievances and increases the likelihood of participating in armed conflicts (e.g. Conca and Wallace 2012, Djernaes et al. 2015, Ide 2017, Schilling et al. 2017). However, in contrast to the well-established literature on the linkages between resources and violent conflict (e.g. Collier and Hoeffler 2005, Ross 2012), environmental peacebuilding is also concerned with the ways in which environmental factors and common resources can bring social
groups and communities affected by violence together, thereby breaking cycles of conflict.

Proposal outline

This PhD research will contribute to this emerging area. The project will explore the linkages between social, political, and ecological processes in one, or a number of, conflict or post-conflict settings. It will examine the impact of environment-related cooperation on interactions and conflicts between social groups and assess the potential of common resources to build peace in violence-affected communities.

This area of research draws on a range of knowledges and academic disciplines. The successful candidate will be encouraged to work in a multidisciplinary way, across peace and conflict studies, environmental sociology, human geography and development studies.

The student will determine the focus area(s) for their project, which might include, but is not limited to:

- Gender
- Resilience
- Climate change
- Politics of scale
- Geographies of Peace
- Governance and Global Institutions
- Water
- Land
- High-value natural resources (e.g. oil, gas, diamonds)
- Traditional and sustainable livelihoods (e.g. fisheries)

The student will identify the approach and methods most suited to their project (external funding might need to be sought – the supervisory team will support the candidate in this).

Applicants

Applicants will have a demonstrable interest in the area of environmental peacebuilding. They will have a background in the social sciences, human geography, peacebuilding, area studies or development studies and will have obtained at least a 2:1 award at undergraduate level. Applicants with a different academic background might be considered if they have relevant work experience.

Contact Details: If you have any queries about the project please contact the Lead Supervisor – Dr Natascha Mueller-Hirth at n.mueller-hirth@rgu.ac.uk

Application process: Please send your cv and an expression of interest, that explains both why the proposal appeals and why you are suitable to undertake the
research, to Dr Natascha Mueller-Hirth at n.mueller-hirth@rgu.ac.uk by noon on 12th June 2017. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited for interview towards the end of June.

References


