

Call for applications

3 PhD scholarships @ Université catholique de Louvain

(UCL-Belgium, Louvain-la-Neuve & Mons)

ARC - Resistance to international prescriptions and injunctions in Africa and the Middle East today

Project summary

This **ARC project** is funded by the **Université catholique du Louvain** (UCL-Belgium), and will focus on resistance to international prescriptions and injunctions in Africa and the Middle East today. Even before the ‘fall of the Berlin Wall’, the doctrines of international organizations were already converging in line with the ‘Western modernity model’. This model seems to affect the way in which policy makers worldwide prescribe standardized development recipes in diverse policy domains. Those policy makers have used a variety of means, including force, to transform local practices, typified as ‘incoherent’ with the model’s core objectives. However, today’s state of affairs illustrates the extent to which uniform prescriptions in line with the ‘modernity ideal’ have failed or are challenged by actors on the ground. Resistance strategies vary in intensity and form, and are often interpreted as the result of local particularities. This research, however, assumes that (1) contestation on the ground, beyond its local characteristics, may be interpreted as a marker of broader resistance to ‘Western modernity’. The project further ambitions (2) to assess whether such contestation affects the ‘modernity ideal’ and, if so, (3) in which way. Resistance is understood here as the combination of *practices* that deviate from the external prescriptions, and *discourses* that legitimize this deviation.

The research project adopts an **interdisciplinary approach** and has **three main objectives**:

1. The first objective of the research is to analyze the ways in which the ‘**Western modernity ideal**’ guides policy prescriptions in Africa and in the Middle East within three public policy domains: (a) land and water policies, (b) primary education and child care policies, (c) and gender/women’s rights policies.
2. Secondly, the project analyzes the **types and intensities of resistance** expressed within these three policy domains. The project will notably focus upon the roles of intermediary actors (local civil society actors, local elites, local administrators ...) that operate between national policy prescribers and local populations.
3. Third, the research aims to analyze the consistency of arguments put forward by intermediary local actors to justify resistance. Through a meta-analysis, it will verify if these arguments have the **potential to converge towards alternative societal projects**, different from the ‘Western modernity model’ embedded in the international political agenda.

The **methodology** of this project is based on a case-study approach that focuses on three core settings and on resistance to three types of public policies: (1) Rwanda – land/water policies; (2) Senegal –

primary education and child care policies; (3) Jordan – gender/women’s rights policies. Innovative **qualitative field research methods** (such as the Group Analysis Method and Participatory Forum Theater) will be adopted in order to address the challenge of collecting data in sensitive societal settings.

Call for PhD candidates (m/f)

Within the framework of this project, the UCL recruits **three PhD candidates (m/f), one for each focal policy/field.**

The selected students will be offered a **four-year scholarship** to undertake and complete a PhD in the field of social sciences on the general theme of this project. Within their research, each candidate will:

- Elaborate a **state-of-affairs** on how the ‘Western modernity ideal’ guides policy prescriptions within a particular setting and policy domain: **(1) Rwanda – land/water policies; (2) Senegal – primary education and child care policies; (3) Jordan – gender/women’s rights policies.**
- Contribute to the elaboration of the **theoretical framework** of the project.
- Contribute to the **methodology** of the project, particularly with regards to the elaboration of qualitative research methods appropriate to the logics of the project and relevant for the various fields.
- Engage in **in-depth field research** (several field research missions to be carried out as of 2017) within a particular setting (Rwanda, Senegal, Jordan) in order to collect data on the types and intensities of resistance expressed by local elites, local civil society actors, local administrators, within a particular policy domain (land/water policies or education policies or gender policies).
- Analyze the gathered field research data, and contribute to a **transversal analysis of the data** collected by the entire team.
- Contribute to the **dissemination** of preliminary and final research results of the project (through publications, conferences, and online valorization of the project).

Profile

The candidates have (for the three vacant positions):

- A **Master’s degree in social sciences** (300 ECTS) obtained at the latest on the 1st of September 2016 with excellent study results (at least the grade of ‘Distinction’ or 14/20 or equivalent), in one of the following (or related) disciplines and study fields: Sociology, Anthropology, Development Studies, Political Science, Public Affairs, International Relations. A more specific expertise in one of the various policy domains (land and water policies; education and child care; gender and women’s rights issues) is a plus.
- An excellent knowledge of oral and written **French**; and a good knowledge of oral and written **English**.
- An outstanding **analytical capacity** with an eye for rigor and detail; a theoretical background is an advantage.
- Excellent **writing skills** and **oral communication skills**; having experience with innovative communication methods (online ...) is an important advantage.

- A knowledge of **qualitative research methods**; having practical experience with in-depth qualitative research methods is an important advantage.
- An outspoken interest in conducting **in-depth field research** in one of the three case study settings (Rwanda, Senegal, Jordan); having experience with field research in unfamiliar settings is a very important advantage.
- A clear capacity to **work autonomously** as well as to engage in **team work**.

For the candidate who will work on **land/water policies in Rwanda**:

- Having **research experience in Africa** – particularly in Central Africa - is an important advantage.
- Having experience with the **analysis of the challenges** in relation to local populations' access to **land or water** is an important advantage.

For the candidate who will work on **education policies in Senegal**:

- Having **research experience in Africa** – particularly in Western Africa - is an important advantage.
- Having experience with the **analysis of the challenges** in relation to local populations' access to **education** is an important advantage.

For the candidate who will work on **gender policies in Jordan**:

- Having **research experience in the Middle East** is an important advantage.
- Having experience with the **analysis of the challenges** in relation to **gender** is an important advantage.
- Having good oral and written communication skills in **Arabic** is an important advantage.

Selection procedure

Candidates are requested to send in their applications before **Sunday 26th of June 2016 (midnight GMT+1)** to:

- An Ansoms for the vacancy on Rwanda – land/water policies (an.ansoms@uclouvain.be);
- Jean-Emile Charlier for the vacancy on Senegal – primary education policies (jean-emile.charlier@uclouvain-mons.be);
- Vincent Legrand and Elena Aoun for the vacancy on Jordan – women's rights policies (vincent.legrand@uclouvain.be; elena.aoun@uclouvain-mons.be).

Candidates must send in:

- a detailed CV, mentioning study results for each year and any other information that might be relevant for the evaluators (for example in relation to the requested candidate profile);
- a motivation letter of max. 2 pages;
- a copy of their dissertation or any other academic text written by the candidate;

- two letters of support from academics who know their work and can testify about their strengths.

The **selection** will take place in two steps:

- Step 1 : pre-selection on the basis of the file
- Step 2 : final selection on the basis of an interview with the pre-selected candidates (to be held on **Wednesday 13th of July** 2016 morning and noon time)