Smart Cities: 'Provincializing' the global urban age in India and South Africa

To start: 1st January 2018

Award

2 fully funded Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) 3-year PhD studentship

Project

The Department of Geography at King's College, London, and the Institute of Geography at Neuchâtel University (Switzerland) offer two PhD scholarships for the research project "Smart Cities: 'Provincializing' the global urban age in India and South Africa", funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (1st January 2018- 31st December 2020). The research aims to analyse how smart city visions are reshaping cities in India and South Africa (see summary below). One PhD scholarship based at King's College will be on Indian and another based at the University of Neuchâtel on South African smart cities.

Studentship based at King's College London

Applications are invited to join King's College London to work on the case of Indian smart cities. The aim of this research is to investigate how the global discourse around smart cities has been 'provincialized' in India. It will analyse globally circulating urban development visions around ICT and data-driven urbanism, their 'mutations' in different urban contexts and their 'hacking' by ordinary citizens. It seeks to provide detailed genealogies of smart cities through in-depth empirical and comparative case studies on Indian smart cities. The project is interdisciplinary and internationally comparative in nature and will suit a highly motivated and enthusiastic graduate with background in human geography, planning, urban sociology, architecture, anthropology and other cognate disciplines. The student will be expected to build on their existing experience, develop their potential and acquire new skills in the area of postcolonial urban futures.

The studentship will be based in the Urban Futures research domain in the Department of Geography, Strand Campus, King's College London. Research in the Department engages with global grand challenges and pressing environmental, urban and social issues such as climate change, disasters, smart cities, risk regulation, water, and human migration. We undertake field research in over 70 countries located in all five continents and our research findings contribute to public debates and policy development on global, national and local scales.

Supervisor

Dr Ayona Datta (ayona.datta@kcl.ac.uk)

Entry requirements

The applicant should have (or be expected to obtain) a Master's degree in human geography (or cognate subject) with a 2:1 or 1st class honours in a subject relevant to the proposed project. Skills in qualitative methodologies as well as (possibly) in quantitative methodologies (esp.

webscraping, data bases) are necessary. Prior knowledge of or experience with research on India is desireable.

We expect the applicant to be scientifically ambitious, to have a strong interest in interdisciplinary research and to be autonomous in their work. We also expect them to present the results of the research in international conferences and jointly authored publications with the project team.

Award type and eligibility

A 3-year full-time PhD studentship funded by SNSF, with a full stipend including funding for tuition fees (at 'home rates' only), fieldwork expenses and conference attendance. If the successful candidate is ineligible for the home tuition rate, then they will be expected to cover the difference in fees.

How to apply

Applicants must please send

(1) a CV (including degree classification for any prior degrees) of no more than 3 pages;

(2) a supporting statement of between 1 and 2 pages setting out how your skills, experience, attributes and interests equip you for this PhD; and

(3) a short covering letter including contact details for two academic referees;

by email to sga-research@kcl.ac.uk no later than 5pm on 29th September. Please include "Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) 3-year PhD studentship" in the subject line.

Please note there is no need to include a Research Proposal in your application as the project has already been set.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

You are welcome to email Dr Ayona Datta (primary supervisor) for more information regarding the project and studentship.

Closing Date: Friday 29th September 2017

Interviews: TBC - October 2017. You will be asked to provide samples of writing if you are shortlisted for interview.

Further Information

About the Urban Futures research domain

About the Department of Geography at King's College London

Research degrees at the Department of Geography

About the Supervisor

Studentship based at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Applications are invited to join the University of Neuchâtel to work on the case of South African smart cities. The aim of this research is to investigate how the global discourse around smart cities has been 'provincialized' in South Africa. It will analyse globally circulating urban development visions around ICT and data-driven urbanism, their 'mutations' in different urban contexts and their 'hacking' by ordinary citizens. It seeks to provide detailed genealogies of smart cities through in-depth empirical and comparative case studies on Indian smart cities. The project is interdisciplinary and internationally comparative in nature and will suit a highly motivated and enthusiastic graduate with background in human geography, planning, urban sociology, architecture, anthropology and other cognate disciplines. The student will be expected to build on their existing experience, develop their potential and acquire new skills in the area of postcolonial urban futures.

The studentship will be based in the Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Research in the Institute investigates major contemporary challenges such as urban development, securitization, climate change and international migrations. Our research contributes to public debate in Switzerland on these major challenges.

Supervisor

Ola Söderström (ola.soderstrom@unine.ch)

Entry requirements

The applicant should have (or be expected to obtain) a Master's degree in human geography, or cognate disciplines in the social sciences. Skills in qualitative methodologies as well as (possibly) in quantitative methodologies (esp. webscraping, data bases) are necessary. Prior knowledge of or experience with research on South Africa is desireable.
We expect the applicant to be scientifically ambitious, to have a strong interest in interdisciplinary research and to be autonomous in their work. We also expect them to present the results of the research in international conferences and jointly authored publications with the project team.

Award type and eligibility

A 3-year full-time PhD studentship funded by SNSF, with a full stipend including funding for fieldwork expenses and conference attendance.

How to apply

Applicants must send their applications by **29th September 2017** to secretariat.geographie@unine.ch.

In your application, you will be asked to include:

- Your CV
- Copies of your diplomas with your grades

- A letter of application in which you state your motivation as well as your scientific and personal aims in relation with a PhD on this theme
- The names and emails of two referees

Please note there is no need to complete the Research Proposal section in your application as the project has already been set.

You are welcome to email Prof. Ola Söderström (primary supervisor) for more information regarding the project and studentship.

References must be received by the deadline for the applicant to be eligible.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Closing Date: Friday 29th September 2017

Interviews: TBC - October 2017.

Further Information

About the Department of Geography at the University of Neuchâtel

About the Swiss Doctoral Programme in Western Switzerland

About the Supervisor

Research Summary: Smart Cities: 'Provincializing' the global urban age in India and South Africa

The aim of this research is to investigate how the global discourse around smart cities has been 'provincialized' in India and South Africa. Smart cities as an 'efficient' solution to the challenges of urban planning and governance has gained traction since 2000 because of the deep involvement of global IT companies, the support of funding programmes from EU, the UK Department for International Development, USAid and the interest of national governments and urban municipalities. As a consequence, retrofitted smart city 'packages' or fully-fledged smart 'city in a box' are increasingly making their way into national agendas in the Global South. In this context, the question we ask is: How are smart city visions reshaping cities in India and South Africa?

Through a comparative study of smart cities in India and South Africa, this research will analyse globally circulating urban development visions around ICT and data-driven urbanism, their 'mutations' in different urban contexts and their 'hacking' by urban social movements. It seeks to provide detailed genealogies of smart cities through in-depth empirical and comparative case studies in particular national contexts. In doing so, it will bridge the gaps in current scholarship on smart cities which either take a techno-managerial approach advocating ubiquitous and efficient use of data or a social-critical approach based on a one-size fits all narrative 'that inhibit making sense of and refashioning the smart city agenda' (Kitchin 2015a). Conceptually, this project will move beyond mere critiques of smart city 'toolkits' to develop the notion of 'Smart Urbanism' (SU) (Luque-Ayala and Marvin 2015a) as a field located at the intersection of postcolonial urbanism, digital citizenships and visions of urban futures. Empirically it seeks to establish the contested nature of the 'actually existing smart city' (Shelton *et al.* 2014) through an investigation on how smart cities affects the agendas and initiatives of municipalities as well as the resistances and counter-initiatives of urban social movements.

In this project, we take 'provincialization' (Chakrabarty 2000) as an analytical tool to direct research on how alternative knowledges about the smart city are produced from the margins of cities, neighbourhoods and populations deeply rooted in historic social inequalities. This will form the basis of developing a new empirical and theoretical research agenda around 'smart urbanism' that captures the local historical, political and alternative forms of data-driven urbanism from the grassroots. In order to test the hypothesis, the project suggests that the following insights - which closely follow those suggested by Kitchin (2015) in order to overcome present shortcomings in current scholarship on the smart city - are required:
 1) How visions of urban development in India and South Africa are being shaped by the logics and practices of the ICT-driven city;
2) How these visions gain social and political credence, restructure local and national policy initiatives and unfold over time in existing cities;
3) Genealogies of urban development within local planning and governance initiatives which uphold the refashioning of existing cities into smart cities;
4) Ways that these visions are contested and disrupted at the scale of local citizens and civil society.
The project puts forward that a combination of political economy and ethnographically driven methods are the best way to provide these insights. It is organised in two phases. The **first phase** will involve a systematic survey of retrofitted smart cities in India and South Africa aiming to produce a comparative analysis of the emergence and development of smart city

initiatives in those two contexts. In the **second phase,** the project will focus on three cities in each country with differing smart city strategies and public debates. The aim will be a comparative 'thick description' of grassroots movements and initiatives that hack into and disrupt the top-down visions of smart cities and claim rights to a range of urban spaces. The first phase will involve mixed-methods of web-based research, mapping, visual and textual document analysis; while the second phase will involve detailed documentary search, semi-structured interviews, ethnography and observations, in addition to the previous methods. The results will contribute to knowledge on urban development and policymaking around smart cities and on the opportunities and risks of smart urbanism in cities of the Global South.