

Two SOAS ERC PhD Studentships Anthropology of Roads/Infrastructure in South Asia

Deadline: 24 April 2015

The project

Roads and the politics of thought: Ethnographic approaches to infrastructure development in South Asia

Applications are invited for two doctoral studentships tenable at SOAS for 3 years (full time) starting in September 2015.

This project offers an exciting opportunity for two outstanding graduates to join a major anthropological research project funded by the European Research Council – as part of the conventional track PhD in Anthropology at SOAS. The project is focused on contemporary road-building projects as infrastructure in South Asia. The overarching aim of the project is to explore the relationship between infrastructure investment and global sustainability through research on the politics and dynamics of particular road-building schemes.

New roads are being constructed at unprecedented rates in certain parts of the world. The proposed research will ask: Why? To what end? Who benefits? What ideas lie in the foundations of this new infrastructure? Roads are presented as solutions to poverty, ‘development’ and economic growth. Are they? In what ways? What else might roads do? As cheap oil dwindles and questions of climate change remain, why are so many international institutions cultivating new roads?

The project will provide the first ethnographic account of the culture of road builders, their knowledge practices, interrelations and motivations. The research will be rooted in case studies of particular road projects in Pakistan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. These sites have been selected to bring to the fore how nation-building, neo-liberalism, ambition, environmental vulnerability and modernity feature in contemporary road-building. We will look at the organisation of road building on the ground, in offices, and within a broader array of institutions and state bodies in national and international contexts in order to understand the global cultures of road-building practice.

The project is academic in design and will contribute to various pressing and critical debates relating to power, global justice and environmental futures. The subject also merits wider discussion and at the core of the research design is an innovative collaboration between anthropologists and leading Indian contemporary artists (CAMP, Mumbai).

Applicants are encouraged to contribute their own provisional research ideas in the form of a proposal along with their application. Suitable projects may focus on particular stretches of new national highways, major tunnel or bridging works, or roads against which particular claims are made for the nation, history or identity. Particular preference may be given to projects which focus on either Pakistan or India. Projects will have anthropological fieldwork at their core, but may also draw on other methodologies, including archival and visual media work.

Applicants are encouraged to contact Professor Edward Simpson at es7@soas.ac.uk for further information about the project in advance of submitting applications.

Criteria and Requirements

- Minimum Entry Requirements: applicants are required to hold a BA and/or MA degree in Anthropology, with a merit or equivalent in the Masters Degree and a MA dissertation grade of 65% or higher. Applicants must provide a clear and coherent research proposal of 2000 words.
- Only new applicants may apply: those already enrolled on a research degree programme at SOAS are not eligible.
- Your on-line admission application should include a research proposal outlining how you would fulfil the provisional project aims described above and a personal statement indicating how you would contribute to the overall aims of the project and the way in which you are qualified to carry it out.
- Shortlisted candidates may be interviewed in person at SOAS or remotely via skype during the week of 11 May 2015.
- The studentship is for a duration of 3 years and will cover course fees at the UK/EU rate and a student stipend: Year one - Euros 22,294***; Year two - Euros 24,523; Year three - Euros 26,975 (***)equivalent to approximately £15,856 but exchange rates are subject to change)
- The studentship is open to applicants paying fees at the UK/EU rate only (Applicants from non-EU countries may apply for this project but will be required to meet the additional costs of overseas fees from other sources).

Candidate Assessment

- Candidates will be assessed on academic merit by a Selection Panel consisting of three academic members.
- The assessment of your application will be based on the information in your on-line application for admission. Selectors will be looking at your degree results and also at academic references, personal statement, research proposal and other relevant information.

Scholarship Application Deadline

- Scholarship applications must be received no later than 5pm (UK local time) on Friday 24 April 2015.
- It is recommended to apply for the research degree two weeks *BEFORE* the scholarship deadline (that is by Friday, 10 April 2015).

Notification of Results

Successful candidates will be notified by the end of May. If you have not heard from us by the end of May, you should assume your application was unsuccessful.

Scholarship Application Procedures

Applicants should follow two steps:

STEP 1: Apply for the research degree (MPhil/PhD) Anthropology and Sociology at SOAS

Applicants must submit a COMPLETE on-line application for admission to the research degree (MPhil/PhD) Anthropology and Sociology <https://www.soas.ac.uk/anthropology/programmes/phd/> as soon as possible but no later than the scholarship deadline of 17:00 UK time, 24 April 2015. It is strongly recommended to apply for the programme two weeks

BEFORE the scholarship deadline (that is by 10 April 2015).

A complete application for admission includes transcripts, an explanation of the grading system for any degrees obtained outside of the UK, two references, CV, research proposal and a personal statement.

IMPORTANT: Your on-line admission application should include a research proposal outlining how you would fulfil the provisional project aims described above and a personal statement indicating how you would contribute to the overall aims of the project and the way in which you are qualified to carry it out.

For any queries regarding the programme application procedure, please click here <https://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/research/> or email researchadmissions@soas.ac.uk dsadmissions@soas.ac.uk

STEP 2: Apply for the scholarship

You must apply for this scholarship via the on-line scholarship application form as soon as possible but no later than the scholarship deadline of 17:00 (UK time), 24 April 2015.

For any queries regarding the studentship application procedure, please email scholarships@soas.ac.uk

For any queries regarding the project, please email Prof. Edward Simpson, es7@soas.ac.uk