

The Department of Economics and Social Sciences, Institute of Social Ecology is currently seeking two

Postgraduate Research Associate project employment (Reference code: 247)

Extent of employment: 30 hours per week
Duration of employment: 1st of April 2024, limited to 28th of February 2027

Gross monthly salary and pay grade in terms of collective agreement for university staff (payable 14 times per year): B1 € 2.458,00

We seek to fill two PhD positions which will collaborate with each other, will be co-supervised by Assoc. Prof. Simone Gingrich and Assoc. Prof. Martin Schmid, and will collaborate closely with a Post-Doc researcher focusing on a reconstruction of biogeochemical fluxes induced by forest use. The project INFEST is planned in an integrative way, and the boundaries of each PhD project can be shifted within the project, depending on the suitable candidates' competences and interests, as well as the final team composition.

PhD project 1 investigates the evolving “cultural programs” that shaped forest use in Austria during 1766-1914, manifested in legal regulations of forest use and management (e.g. provincial forest regulations 1766, forest act 1852 and later revisions), and the debates surrounding them. Specifically, this PhD project explores how rationalized views on forest use gained dominance throughout the long 19th century. It elaborates the underlying political, scientific and economic rationales promoted by major actors, such as policy-makers, large forest owners and learned experts. Methodologically, this project relies on qualitative content analysis of historical sources, most of which are printed and available digitally and can thus be analyzed using history methods, such as coding or text mining.

PhD project 2 analyzes the changes in “social practices” of forest use, as well as emerging conflicts over forest uses at the local level. The focus will be on two case studies, Herrschaft Steyr, Upper Austria, and Vienna Bürgerspital, Lower Austria near Vienna, their respective specific dynamics and embeddedness in larger-scale technological and social change. This PhD project relies on analyses of archival sources such as forest management plans, forest inventories, other entrepreneurial documents, as well as “Servitude” regulating the access to forest uses for actors other than the owners, and litigation documents informing about conflicts over forests. In case of interest and respective source availability, this PhD project can also contribute to quantitative accounting of forest biogeochemical fluxes at the local level.

Topic

Prevailing public narratives on the history of forestry still tend to portray the emergence of scientific forestry in Europe as the birthplace of the idea of sustainability. However, recent research in environmental history has indicated that the adoption and mainstreaming of the principles of rational forestry adhered to a narrow economic understanding of sustainability and resulted in adverse outcomes for many local communities. In the project INFEST (“The Industrialization of Austrian Forests”) funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and led by Assoc. Prof. Simone Gingrich, we investigate the industrialization of Austrian forests during 1766-1914. We hypothesize that this period, during which Austrian forests underwent a shift from forest depletion to recovery, also marked a regime shift from a multifunctional towards an industrialized forest regime, characterized by distinct changes in sociocultural and ecological forest characteristics. The project traces changes in cultural programs, social practices and biogeochemical fluxes of forest use during the industrialization of Austrian forests. The aim of the project is to develop a nuanced environmental history of Austrian forest change.

Institute

The Institute of Social Ecology Vienna (SEC) is part of the Department of Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU). Research and teaching at the Institute of Social Ecology deals with the interrelations of social and natural systems in the context of a socio-ecological transformation. Researchers come from interdisciplinary backgrounds such as ecology, sociology, political science, and history. The methodological spectrum includes material and energy flow analysis (MEFA), geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing methods, qualitative social research, and historical analyses. SEC hosts the Doctoral School Social Ecology (DSSE), which the selected PhD candidates will be part of.

Required skills and qualifications

- Diploma degree in history (environmental, social, political or legal history, history of science, or other relevant specialization), interdisciplinary sustainability sciences (e.g. environment and bioresources management), or other equivalent university degree
- Excellent language skills in German (reading) and English (reading, writing and speaking)
- Experience in the application of relevant qualitative methods, e.g. historical source analysis, qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, source critique
- Readiness to engage in interdisciplinary team work

Desirable skills and qualifications

- Experience in archival research
- Experience in the application of quantitative methods of sustainability accounting or GIS
- Knowledge of 19th century forest and agricultural history in Central Europe
- Basic knowledge of forest ecology

Applications can be submitted until: 31st of January 2024

University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna seeks to increase the number of its female faculty and staff members. Therefore qualified women are strongly encouraged to apply. In case of equal qualification, female candidates will be given preference unless reasons specific to an individual male candidate tilt the balance in his favour.

People with disabilities and appropriate qualifications are specifically encouraged to apply.

Please send your job application incl.

- motivation letter
- CV
- Short research proposal for PhD project 1 or 2, or a combination of both, including references to relevant literature (max. 3 pages)
- Full academic CV, including publications (if available)
- Proof of eligibility, in particular details on education and Master's degree
- Names and contact details of max. three references

to simone.gingrich@boku.ac.at. (Reference code: 247)

We regret that we cannot reimburse applicants travel and lodging expenses incurred as part of the selection and hiring process.

www.boku.ac.at