



The Department of Economics and Social Sciences, Institute of Social Ecology (SEC) is currently seeking a

## Postgraduate Research Associate

### PhD position: Analyzing the ongoing forest transition in Laos from a socio-ecological perspective (Project Employment)

(Reference code: 149)

Extent of employment: 30 Hours per Week  
Duration of employment: 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022

Gross monthly salary and pay grade in terms of collective agreement  
for university staff (payable 14 times per year): B1, €2.096,00

#### 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 sustainable development. Researchers come from interdisciplinary backgrounds such as ecology, sociology, anthropology, 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.

#### Topic

Research on forest transitions traditionally focuses on economic and/or political change affecting forest areas and/or forest carbon stocks. A socio-ecological perspective broadens the scope of analyses by linking forest change to changes in the energetic resource base of societies. In this context, the recently started ERC Starting Grant project “Hidden emissions of forest transitions” (HEFT; led by Simone Gingrich) aims at identifying those socio-metabolic processes which relieve forests from pressure, the emissions they cause, and their socio-political context. These “hidden emissions” will then be compared to the carbon sequestration of reforestation in order to identify the net climate change mitigation effect of forest transitions. The ultimate aim is to draw lessons for climate change mitigation policies.

#### PhD project

The PhD project investigates the ongoing forest transition in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Laos) from a socio-ecological perspective. Relevant socio-metabolic forest relief processes are identified in Laos for periods of decreasing deforestation, forest area stagnation, and recent forest regrowth. Such processes include the decrease of traditional swidden farming, large-scale agricultural intensification and regional specialization, changing trade patterns, and shifts in energy use. Specific political-economic processes and policies affecting forest change (e.g., REDD+ activities, international investments, agricultural and foreign trade policies) are analysed with regard to their impact on forest change, based on both field work and desk research. The aim is to establish integrated socio-ecological GHG budgets, comparing the carbon sink of forest transitions to the emissions caused by forest relief processes, and to understand the politics affecting them. In addition to analyses at the national level, regional-scale case studies will be conducted, addressing the diversity of trajectories involving different constellations of actors and interests.

The successful candidate will collaborate with the HEFT project team and will be given access to existing databases and methodological tools. The candidate is expected to contribute to further methods development and establishment of databases. The PhD candidate will be supported to publish peer-reviewed scientific articles and to participate in international scientific conferences. The candidate has the option of compiling a cumulative thesis based on these publications.

### Required skills and qualifications

- ✿ Excellent MSc or equivalent degree in interdisciplinary environmental sciences, such as Social Ecology, Human Ecology, Political Ecology, Ecological Anthropology, or Ecological Economics
- ✿ Knowledge of relevant quantitative methods of sustainability accounting, e.g., Material and Energy Flow Analysis, HANPP, Carbon and GHG accounting and/or GIS.
- ✿ Knowledge of qualitative research methods, e.g., conducting interviews, focus groups and/or surveys
- ✿ Excellent communication skills in English (oral and in writing)
- ✿ Readiness to engage in interdisciplinary team work

### Desirable skills and qualifications

- ✿ Working experience in quantitative methods of sustainability accounting
- ✿ Experience in field research
- ✿ Knowledge of or research experience in Laos or another Southeast Asian country
- ✿ Basic knowledge of forest ecology
- ✿ German language skills

Applications can be submitted until: 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2018

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.

Please send your job application including

- ✿ Motivation letter (max. 1-2 pages)
- ✿ Research proposal, including references (max. 2-3- 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 Mag. Dr. Simone Gingrich, Institute of Social Ecology, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, 1070 Vienna, Schottenfeldgasse 29/1; E-Mail: [simone.gingrich@boku.ac.at](mailto:simone.gingrich@boku.ac.at). **(Reference code: 149)**

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

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