



## **Environmental communication and campaigning on air pollution ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship**

### **University of Leicester and Greenpeace**

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

University of Leicester as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner Greenpeace to commence in October 2019.

The dynamics of public controversy about environmental issues have changed dramatically in the present century. This is due to diverse environmental issues being increasingly framed and politicised in the wider context of climate change, and it is due to changes in the media and communications landscape, including the rise of social media and citizen journalism, as well as the relative decline of traditional mainstream media as fora of public debate. These changes have implications for how key stakeholders engage strategically to influence policies and opinions with regard to core social issues such as climate change, energy, pollution and sustainability.

Focusing on the campaigning strategies of prominent environmental pressure group Greenpeace, the project aims to map the wider ecology, dynamics and evolution of public controversy by analysing the case of campaigning around air pollution, a campaign being both spearheaded by Greenpeace UK and part of the organisation's broader climate change campaign. Investigating this key campaign strand, the project focuses on communication around air pollution in the context of campaigning on the shift from fossil fuels to renewables in the UK and across Europe. The project will (a) enable a comprehensive understanding of a particular case of environmental communication and (b) provide insights into the working of internationally coordinating campaigning, following Greenpeace's shift from a centralised to a decentralised model of campaigning.

Within the broader objective of investigating the key drivers of public discourse – including the public and strategic communication practices of key stakeholders – the project will map how Greenpeace, as one of the most prominent global environmental non-governmental campaign groups, strategically engages in public communication and action. Benefiting from the research access facilitated by Greenpeace, the research will examine Greenpeace's campaigning strategy by looking at the intersection of offline, 'on the ground' protests and communication/campaigning via traditional news media and newer online media platforms. Of particular interest will be mapping of the way in which Greenpeace engages with, mobilises and negotiates relationships

with other stakeholders (conservation groups, industry and political decision makers), both nationally and at a pan-European level.

### **Key research questions:**

- Who are the key claims-makers in public communication and debate about air pollution?
- What is their relative prominence and success across different media and communications platforms?
- How does Greenpeace communicate, campaign and engage strategically 'on the ground' and via new and traditional media?
- How is Greenpeace's campaigning and communication strategically contextualised in relation to:
  - its internal model of campaigning;
  - its core campaigning on climate change and the shift from fossil energy sources to renewables;
  - other campaign strands;
  - other NGOs;
  - the different targeted publics
  - other stakeholders, notably local/national government/authorities, companies and businesses?
- How is Greenpeace evaluating, assessing, adapting and developing its communication and campaigning strategy?

### **Key data/data-collection:**

- Archival research on Greenpeace records and documentation on climate change and air pollution campaigns.
- Interviews with key Greenpeace personnel and observation of policy and campaign strategy processes in the organisation.
- Mapping and analysis of public and social media communication about air pollution, with a particular focus on the presence and role of different claims-makers/stakeholders, including Greenpeace.
- Interviews/focus group interviews with local decision-makers, stakeholders and publics.
- Observation of specific campaign events/actions/protests and communication strategies present at these.

Conceptualised as a **case study** of the evolution and dynamics of public communication and controversy about air pollution, the research will involve a range of social science research methods and approaches, notably:

- Ethnographic/observational approaches
- Interviewing and focus group interviewing
- Textual and visual analysis approaches (drawing on content and framing analysis)

**The project will provide the student** with training in a range of key social science research methods, privileged access to organisational (Greenpeace) data and personnel, and an excellent knowledge of environmental communication research and practice. **The wider (scholarly) community** will benefit from novel insights into the changing nature and dynamics of public, mediated communication about a controversial issue in the new media and communications landscape.

## **Application Process**

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#) along with two references, a cover letter and a CV. Please email this to Louise Taylor at [esrcdtp@le.ac.uk](mailto:esrcdtp@le.ac.uk).

**Application deadline: Wednesday 6 March 2019**

## **Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP**

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit:

[www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/](http://www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/)

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Media, Communication and Sociology, University of Leicester prior to application can be directed to Anders Hansen at [ash@le.ac.uk](mailto:ash@le.ac.uk).