



What difference does civil society make? Exploring relationships between social cohesion and associational life in the context of ethnic and religious diversity

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Birmingham and Near Neighbours

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.

The Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner, [Near Neighbours](#), to commence in October 2018.

We are seeking an enthusiastic, highly motivated candidate to conduct research into the relationship between social cohesion and civil society in the context of ethnic and religious diversity. The successful applicant will demonstrate the academic ability to conduct sustained and rigorous research, as well as the relational and communication skills to work effectively in generating and sharing learning in collaboration with the partner organisation.

Project outline: This project will explore the impact of variations in the presence, nature and extent of civil society activity on intergroup conflicts and tensions in disadvantaged communities in England. It has a particular focus on ethnic and religious diversity and will include research on initiatives implemented by the Near Neighbours programme, which are designed to build social cohesion and strengthen civil society at the local level. Near Neighbours originated from work by the Church Urban Fund (CUF) which for 30 years has been at the forefront of faith-based responses to issues of deprivation and social cohesion.

The project involves mixed methods, including analysis of data on the distribution and characteristics of projects operated by Near Neighbours, survey data on social action and volunteering, documentary research into Near Neighbours' projects, and ample opportunity for qualitative/ethnographic research, spending time in a variety of communities and conducting interviews or focus groups with community members and those engaged in local civil society organisations.

This opportunity will interest well-qualified applicants from human geography / urban studies / planning, sociology, political science, social policy, or other related disciplines. The supervision team comprises John Mohan (Director, [Third Sector Research Centre](#)), Andrew Davies (Reader in Theology; Director, [Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion](#)) and Heather Buckingham ([Director of Research and Policy, Church Urban Fund](#)). There will be extensive opportunity for active engagement (e.g. extended placements) with the policy and evaluation work of Near Neighbours.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#), including a covering letter explaining why you are applying for this award and, along with two references, email this to socialpolicy-doctoralresearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk copied to j.mohan@bham.ac.uk

Application deadline: Friday 16th February 2018, 5.00pm

Interview date: 22 or 23 February 2018

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/

Informal enquiries prior to application can be directed to **John Mohan** (j.mohan@bham.ac.uk).