



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND POPULAR MOBILISATION IN THE MENA

Digest of Current Publications and Events

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CALLS FOR PAPERS & CONFERENCES

The Past in the Present of the Middle East

15-16 April 2016

SOAS, Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre

Organiser: Council for British Research in the Levant in association with the London Middle East Institute

A two-day conference organised by the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) and the London Middle East Institute to showcase the work of CBRL and its partners in the region. The conference will present sessions on a number of themes linking the past to the present day in the Middle East.

- Cultural heritage in conflict
- Cultural heritage, society and economics
- Britain and the Levant: Culture and (Mis)Communication
- The past in the political present: the legacy of colonialism and intervention
- The Politics of Dissent: challenges to Orientalism and Zionism
- The impact of research – working with humanitarian agencies/practitioners
- Closing session: The future of the past in the Middle East

The conference is intended as an opportunity to speak to a wide audience, not only the academic community but also policy makers, practitioners and members of the public. We believe that this event will make an important contribution to the profile of research in the region.

Contact email: CBRL@britac.ac.uk

More information [here](#)

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CfP: Research in Times of Change and Uncertainty: Europe, the Middle East, and Beyond

23-24 May 2016, University of Exeter

Deadline for abstracts: **11 April 2016**

A two-day event sponsored by the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies and the Politics Department. The current political events are fostering new paradigms for the study of emerging challenges on both sides of the Mediterranean. Borders and domestic politics no longer pose limits for the interconnected world we live in. The Syrian crisis spilled over in its neighbouring states, and waves of refugees escaping the violence and seeking asylum in Europe are testing host countries and the

European project itself. At the same time, non-state actors, such as Daesh, are well positioned to confront the perceived and long-established paradigm of security in Europe since the end of the II World War.

The Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies and the Politics Department of the University of Exeter will be holding a conference to address this current state of uncertainty in Europe, the Middle East and world, and to understand how we, as researchers, should conduct our work within these complex dynamics.

The conference is open to all researchers working in the humanities and social sciences, including, but not limited to:

- Anthropology
- Archaeology
- European Studies
- Gender studies
- History
- International relations
- Islamic and religious studies
- Language and Literature
- Law
- Migration studies
- Political economy
- Political science
- Political theory
- Public policy
- Security and Strategic Studies
- Sociology

Those interested in presenting a paper at the event are required to submit a 200-300 word abstract and a short biography (through the provided application form) by 11 April 2016 to iaispgrconference@exeter.ac.uk.

More information [here](#)

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RECENT & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Young Generation Awakening - Economics, Society, and Policy on the Eve of the Arab Spring

Edward A. Sayre and Tarik M. Yousef (Eds)
2016 (August) – Oxford University Press

What has remained unclear is why youth became the vanguards of the Arab Spring protests and why they have not played a more prominent role in the transitions that followed. To address these questions, the authors in this volume use updated data sets on demography, employment, education, inequality, social media and public sentiment to examine the underlying socioeconomic conditions of young people in the Middle East at the time of the uprisings and offer a mosaic of analytical explanations linking those conditions from 2009-2011 to the revolts of 2010-2012.

The findings in the volume confirm the inadequacy of traditional narrow explanations rooted in demographic profiles, economic grievances or political exclusion in accounting for the complex socioeconomic dynamics facing youth and societies at large in the Middle East in the period leading up to the Arab Spring. The contributors emphasize the fundamental institutional rigidities in the region's policy space and evaluate potential approaches to policy reform that can promote youth inclusion and help transform the region's political economies in the post Arab Spring environment of persistent economic volatility, social unrest and political instability.

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10. Does Labor Law Reform Offer an Opportunity for Reducing Arab Youth Unemployment?
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Popular Contention, Regime, and Transition - Arab Revolts in Comparative Global Perspective

Eitan Y. Alimi, Avraham Sela, and Mario Sznajder (Eds)
2016 (August) – Oxford University Press

Through a diverse array of case studies from countries around the world, this volume places the Arab Spring uprisings in comparative perspective, demonstrating the similarities and parallels between contentious events in democratic and authoritarian-like regimes. Leading scholars in the fields of political science, sociology, and international studies discuss topics such as the set of initial conditions involved in the protest, prospects of contention, and forms of protest, as well as the role of historical legacies, regime responses, the military, social polarization, and external factors in the divergent outcomes of protest. By situating the study of contention in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes in comparative perspective, *Popular Contention, Regime, and Transition* generates powerful insights into the impetus, dynamics, and consequences of contention in all contexts.

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Karen Rasler

PART III: BETWEEN TRANSITION AND CONTENTION

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Vincent Boudreau

10. Chile's Winter of Discontent: Is Protest Achieving Deeper Democratization?

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Gayil Talshir

CONCLUSION

The Arab Revolts in Comparative Historical Perspective

Avraham Sela

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Political Identities and Popular Uprisings in the Middle East

Edited by Shabnam J. Holliday and Philip Leech

2016 (April) - Rowman & Littlefield

Identity plays an important part in terms of how we imagine our relationship with the state and governing bodies. If we know who we are, then we can know and articulate what we want as political actors. This book examines the relationship between identity and political dissent in the context of the Arab and non-Arab Middle East by focusing on recent uprisings and protests in the region. The case studies here - Iran, Palestine, Israel, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan – highlight a number of dynamics and different forms of resistance. These examples show how political identities are multiple, not static and that they are too complex to be reduced to superficial dichotomies of Islamism vs. secularism or Sunnism vs. Shi'ism. Through examining the relationship between everyday grassroots politics and the question of identity, as well as elite identity discourses, this volume presents a textured analysis of the region's dynamic political communities. This book explores how different identities must be navigated, negotiated and how they intersect at a time of dramatic change in the Middle East.

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Ennahdha, and the Revival of an Arab-Islamic Identity, *Rory McCarthy* / 10. Conclusion, *Shabnam J. Holliday and Philip Leech*

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Civil Resistance in the Arab Spring - Triumphs and Disasters

Edited by Adam Roberts, Michael J. Willis, Rory McCarthy, and Timothy Garton Ash
2016 (January) – Oxford University Press

Why did so much go wrong? Was the problem the methods, leadership and aims of the popular movements, or the conditions of their societies? In this book, experts on these countries, and on the techniques of civil resistance, set the events in their historical, social and political contexts. They describe how governments and outside powers—including the US and EU—responded, how Arab monarchies in Jordan and Morocco undertook to introduce reforms to avert revolution, and why the Arab Spring failed to spark a Palestinian one. They indicate how and why Tunisia remained, precariously, the country that experienced the most political change for the lowest cost in bloodshed.

This book provides a vivid illustrated account and rigorous scholarly analysis of the course and fate, the strengths and the weaknesses, of the Arab Spring. The authors draw clear and challenging conclusions from these tumultuous events. Above all, they show how civil resistance aiming at regime change is not enough: building the institutions and the trust necessary for reforms to be implemented and democracy to develop is a more difficult but equally crucial task.

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Challenging Neoliberalism at Turkey's Gezi Park - From Private Discontent to Collective Class Action

Gürcan, E., Peker, E.

2015 – Palgrave Macmillan

In *Challenging Neoliberalism at Turkey's Gezi Park*, Gürcan and Peker explore the events of May 31, 2013, when what began as a localized demonstration against the demolition of Gezi Park, a public park in Istanbul turned into a nationwide protest cycle with an unprecedented form and scale never before seen in Turkey's history.

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5. Forging Political Consciousness at Gezi: The Case of “Disproportionate Intelligence”
6. Looking Ahead: “Gezi Spirit” and Its Aftermath

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Social Movements in Egypt and Iran

Tara Povey

2015 – Palgrave Macmillan

The contemporary movements seen on the streets of the Middle East today have their roots in a rich history of social and political struggle in the region. Since the 1990s, large-scale social movements have mobilised millions in opposition to authoritarian regimes often backed by the West. In Egypt, diverse movements opposed the Mubarak regime and its dependence on the US, and have gone on to fight for further transformative change. In Iran, an Islamic reform movement, women's movement and democracy movement has challenged the undemocratic and exclusivist nature of the Islamic state since the 1990s. This book analyses the reform movement in Iran and the groups and organisations that form the basis of the Egyptian opposition movement in their historical contexts. It argues that the contemporary movements have not arisen out of a vacuum but represent the culmination of over twenty years of mobilisation by social movements. This mobilisation is itself part of a history of struggle for democracy, social justice and freedom in the region that dates back over a century.

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Nonviolent Struggle - Theories, Strategies, and Dynamics

Sharon Nepstad

2015 – Oxford University Press

From Gandhi's movement to win Indian independence to the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, an expanding number of citizens have used nonviolent action to win political goals. While such events have captured the public imagination, they have also generated a new surge of scholarly interest in the field of nonviolence and civil resistance studies. Although researchers have produced new empirical data, theories, and insights into the phenomenon of nonviolent struggle, the field is still quite unfamiliar to many students and scholars.

In *Nonviolent Struggle: Theories, Strategies, and Dynamics*, sociologist Sharon Nepstad provides a succinct introduction to the field of civil resistance studies, detailing its genesis, key concepts and debates, and a summary of empirical findings. Nepstad depicts the strategies and dynamics at play in nonviolent struggles, and analyzes the factors that shape the trajectory and outcome of civil resistance movements. The book draws on a vast array of historical examples, including the U.S. civil rights movement, the Indonesian uprising against President Suharto, the French Huguenot resistance during World War II, and Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers. Nepstad describes both principled and pragmatic nonviolent traditions and explains various categories of nonviolent action, concluding with an assessment of areas for future research.

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OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Frustrated Palestinian teachers escalate strike action

Al Jazeera, 11 Mar 2016

Nadim Baba

Government under pressure as it refuses to pay teachers higher salaries in line with living costs. Tens of thousands of Palestinian teachers have entered a second month of a strike, demanding a pay rise which they say was promised years ago. The strike has closed state schools across the West Bank and pitted teachers against their own union leaders and a hesitant government. The teachers say their pay packets have not increased alongside the rising cost of living. "Prices keep rising but my salary's stayed the same. I've been teaching for 31 years now, and my basic salary is still just \$600," says Nasser Abu Thuraya, who is currently turning up to school but not teaching as part of the demonstration. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Thousands of Iraqis stage anti-government protest

Al Jazeera, 12 Mar 2016

For the third week, Iraqis gather in Baghdad's streets to protest corruption and call for an independent cabinet. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have taken to the streets of Baghdad for the third week in a row to demand a political overhaul. Gathering on Friday in the capital, protesters heeded a call to gather by powerful Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who is pressuring the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to push on with a plan to form a cabinet of independent ministers. In a pre-recorded speech aired during the demonstration, al-Sadr said: "I urge Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to press on with plans to form an independent cabinet of technocrats, to fight graft despite political pressure to desist. "I want the prime minister to continue his reform plan with no fear of political pressure." *Continue reading [here](#)*

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With spread of IS-like tactics, urban warfare in Turkey grows bloodier

Al Monitor, 7 March 2016

Mahmut Bozarslan

In the middle of heavy clashes Feb. 19 between Turkish security forces and groups affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Diyarbakir's Sur district came news that a building had collapsed. Three special forces soldiers in the building were killed. Official statements did not make clear what happened. Security sources, however, told newspapers that the building had collapsed when a booby trap exploded. The incident reminded observers of another on June 25, when Mishtenur Hospital, which had been held by the Islamic State, was blown up by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) with all the people in it. The techniques used were similar. But where had the Feb. 19 attackers learned these tactics? The force involved was the PKK's youth wing, the Civil Defense Units (YPS) — previously known as the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Champions for Justice: Bahrain's Pro-Democracy Movement

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, 9 February 2016

Five years ago this week, hundreds of thousands of people rose up in support of democracy and human rights in Bahrain. After enduring decades of structural inequalities, corruption, and repression, nearly half the country's population gathered to demand reform. The government responded swiftly, and severely. Riot police flooded the streets, employing excessive and indiscriminate force to disperse the demonstrations and suppress the movement. Assisted by a Saudi and Emirati contingent of the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force, Bahraini

authorities violently put down the peaceful uprising, leading to thousands of arrests, hundreds of injuries, and dozens of deaths. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Egypt Running on Empty

MER277, Winter 2015

Joshua Stacher

An authoritarian regime may be unpopular, even loathed, but at least it has rules. The rules may bear little resemblance to the law, but relations between state officials and society come to have a predictable rhythm. People understand where the red lines are, and they can choose to stay within them or to step across. Egypt does not work this way under the field marshal who became president, 'Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi. Nearly three years since the military coup that brought Sisi to power, not only are the red lines blurred, but the unconsolidated regime itself is so fuzzily defined that Egyptians doubt it is one coherent entity. The security forces seem to have slipped the leash of the executive branch. As one journalist told me in Cairo, "You never know which security branch it is any more. The only thing that's clear is that Sisi does not control them. It's unpredictable and unsettled. That's what makes everything dangerous. You can't see it coming." *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Hope without Illusion: Ten Signs of Change in Egypt

Jadaliyya, 14 March 2016

Abdelrahman Mansour and Mohamed Aboelgheit

Egyptians occupying streets, blocking traffic, and chanting patriotic slogans: Contrary to conventional wisdom, these images became part of Egypt's contemporary political arena well before the January 2011 Revolution. We saw them on multiple occasions in 2006, 2008, and even in 2010, when Egypt's national football team won the Africa Cup of Nations. Those are but a few examples of the intense mobilization that took place during the lead up to the revolution..... There is no doubt that the period between 2013 and 2015 were particularly difficult for advocates of transformative change in Egypt. Yet in some ways they were similar to the 1980s and 1990s, when the Mubarak's regime had succeeded in suppressing politics and dissent under the pretext of fighting "terrorism." There are ten reasons to believe that we are now reliving Mubarak's last decade in office, that is, an era of political "exercises," which, slowly but surely, are paving the way for new, promising opportunities. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Egypt:] Attempts to disperse large protest by taxi drivers against Uber & Careem unsuccessful

Mada Masr, 9 March 2016

Police fired warning shots in the air on Tuesday in an attempt to disperse dozens of disgruntled taxi drivers in Giza, where they were protesting against international companies Uber and Careem. A number of taxi drivers threatened to stage an open-ended sit-in if private companies are permitted to continue with what they describe as “unfair competition.” Several rows of white taxis were lined up in Giza blocking traffic on Tuesday. Police fired blank shots into the air in an attempt to get drivers to move their vehicles, the Masr al-Arabiya news portal reported, adding that there were minor scuffles, but no serious injuries. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Egypt:] Doctors won't give up

Al-Ahram Weekly, Issue No.1287, 17 March, 2016

Reem Leila

Hundreds of doctors staged a protest on 12 March in front of the downtown headquarters of the Doctors Syndicate against the “continuous brutality” of the police against doctors. Doctors held banners decrying the assault by policemen on two doctors at Al-Matariya Hospital and demanded that the officers be tried “to preserve the dignity of doctors”. Others called for legislative protection for healthcare facilities, which also criminalises assaults against doctors. The doctors also chanted slogans demanding protection while on duty and called for enforcing legislation which would better secure hospitals against assaults. In late January, two policemen were detained after they assaulted two doctors at Al-Matariya Hospital for reportedly refusing to sign forged papers. The policemen, however, were released within 24 hours, angering doctors across the country. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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The Muslim Brotherhood: Falling apart at the seams

Al-Ahram Weekly, Issue No.1287, 17 March, 2016

Amany Maged

Despite attempts on the part of some Muslim Brotherhood leaders to halt the movement's disintegration, the Jordanian chapter of the Brotherhood has announced that it no longer has any links with its mother organisation. The break, first mooted a year ago, was formalised during a recent meeting of the Jordanian Brotherhood's Shura Council. Though the Brotherhood in Jordan espouses the same ideology as the Egyptian organisation, the decision to break ties with the Muslim Brothers in Egypt appears to have been motivated by apprehensions that the organisation in Jordan could face the same fate as its Egyptian counterpart and end up being labelled as a terrorist group by the Jordanian government. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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[Lebanon:] Garbage Politics

MER277, Winter 2015

Ziad Abu-Rish

In late July 2015, mounds of garbage began piling up across Beirut and the towns of Mount Lebanon to the capital's east. While not without precedent in poorer neighborhoods, such heaps of rubbish had never appeared in more affluent areas. By mid-August, Lebanese government officials, businesspeople, activists, residents and media outlets were all speaking about a garbage crisis. Some observers took a benign view of the accumulating trash, seeing it as one more symptom of the alleged absence of a state in Lebanon. For those inclined to more sinister interpretations, the crisis was the logical outcome of the purported strain that more than 1 million Syrian refugees have placed on Lebanese infrastructure. As the refuse rotted in the streets and political debates remained stuck in the above terms, a broad protest movement consolidated itself. Popular mobilizations challenged both benign and sinister accounts and called into question the conventional wisdom about the state, social order and politics in Lebanon. *Continue reading [here](#)*

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On Failing to “Get It Together” - Syria’s Opposition Between Idealism and Realism

MER277, Winter 2015

Ali Nehmé Hamdan

Rain falls thick and heavy outside the window. Shadi sits in the near dark drinking sage tea, fighting the November chill, but more so the pessimistic vantage onto Syria from his refuge in neighboring Jordan. A vocal civil society activist in Homs during the early stages of the Syrian revolution, Shadi fled to Lebanon when it became clear that his pseudonym would no longer protect him from the informants of the regime of Bashar al-Asad. Only there, he feared that Asad's Lebanese allies Hizballah might pick up where the regime had left off, and so he departed for Jordan's quiet capital, Amman. A journalist now, he maintains regular contact with the Syrian opposition—inside and outside—but the view is not encouraging. It should be no surprise, Shadi says, for the course of the war has “undone an entire society.” *Continue reading [here](#)*

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Policing neoliberalism in Egypt: the continuing rise of the 'securocratic' state

Third World Quarterly, February 2016

Maha Abdelrahman

This article examines the increasing power of the police, their centrality to the reproduction of the neoliberal global order and their dynamic relationship with various elements of the ruling elite. It focuses on the case of the post-2011 uprising in Egypt to examine how the police institution has taken advantage of the uprising to increase its power and relative autonomy. The article demonstrates the centrality of the police to the Sisi regime's efforts at reducing political discourse to an inflated and simplistic concept of 'security' in an attempt to establish its long-term legitimacy.

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Decentralising authoritarianism? The international intervention, the new 'revolutionaries' and the involution of Post-Qadhafi Libya

Mattia Toaldo

Small Wars and Insurgencies 27, No.1 (2016)

In 2011, Libya became the only country of the Arab Uprisings where NATO and the Arab League intervened militarily, ostensibly to protect the civilian population, but in reality in support of the opposition National Transitional Council. This article argues that, since 2011, Libya has transitioned from Qadhafi's centralised authoritarianism to a new decentralised authoritarianism where multiple centres of power coexist and sometimes overlap, while leaving room only for formal democratic institutions. This is the result of decisions taken by the 'revolutionaries' after the overthrow of the dictator, and a consequence of long-standing features of the Libyan state and society.

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POSITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Doctoral research fellowship in contemporary Middle East Studies

A PhD Research Fellowship in contemporary Middle East Studies is available at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS), University of Oslo. The person appointed will be affiliated with the Faculty's organized research training. The academic work is to result in a doctoral thesis that will be defended at the Faculty with a view to obtaining the degree of PhD. Read more about the doctoral degree. The appointment is for the duration of three years.

The fellowship is part of the interdisciplinary research project “The New Middle East: Emerging political and ideological trends” (<http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/projects/new-middle-east/index.html>) and its follow-up project’s research activities. The successful candidate is expected to join the research group and to be an active part of the larger research environment at the department, in particular the activities at Center for Islamic and Middle East Studies (<https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/center/islamic-and-middle-east-studies/>).

Thematic focus

The PhD research project should address one of two thematic fields:

The **historical evolution of one (or several) of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)’s branches** in the larger Middle East and North Africa region (extending east to include Pakistan) since the 1970s when political liberalization in a number of countries in the region made political participation and activism more overt and visible. Preference will be given to projects that explore the MB movements’ success in local grassroots mobilization and their role in fostering a political culture among non-elite segments of society.

Historical and/or contemporary cases of non-state governance in the Middle East and South Asia, including Afghanistan. The focus will be on practices and how these relate to issues of sovereignty and legitimacy. Specific territories of interests are Palestinian camps, Kurdish areas in Iran, Iraq and Turkey, tribal areas in Yemen, FATA in Pakistan, northern regions of Kashmir, Polisario-held “Free zone”/“Buffer Zone” in Western Sahara, and Taliban-held areas in Afghanistan. The use of comparative perspectives is encouraged, but not mandatory. Relevant language competence to undertake in-depth case studies is a requirement.

Requirements

The successful candidate must have completed a Master's Degree or equivalent in Middle East studies or South Asia Studies with an Middle East/Islam orientation, or in a relevant discipline in social sciences or humanities.

It is an absolute requirement that the applicant has proficiency in the Middle East or South Asia language relevant to his/her PhD research project.

The Master's Degree has to have been awarded by the time of application. Candidates who have already obtained a PhD degree or submitted a PhD thesis in a similar field will not be considered for this fellowship.

We offer

salary level 50 - 56 (NOK 430 500 – 475 400, depending on qualifications)

a professionally stimulating working environment, attractive welfare benefits

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