FULL-TIME ACADEMIC POSITION IN ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES

FACULTY OF SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT FOR GEOSCIENCES, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

Reference: 2020/A014
Application deadline: February 3rd, 2020
Start date: October 1st, 2020

Job description

**Institutional Environment:**

The Institute for Environmental Management and Land-use Planning (http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/) within the Department for Geosciences, Environment and Society (https://sciences.ulb.be/departement-geosciences-environnement-et-societe) is seeking to appoint a new colleague in the wider field of Environmental Humanities to reinforce its research and teaching capacities in the domain of Sustainability Sciences\(^1\). The profile is framed – in terms of research and teaching – by the candidate’s adherence to a strong sustainability agenda, and her/his capacity to develop a system’s approach, and to apply inter- and/or transdisciplinary methods to the exploration of interdependencies between the micro-, meso- and macro-levels of contemporary societies.

The candidate will be inserted in an institutional environment undergoing a profound reconfiguration. She participates to a collective process to establish a new research unit (Socio-Environmental Systems’ (r)Evolutions – SENSE) in the course of merging two existing units CEDD (http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/unites-de-recherche/details/unit/centre-detudes-du-developpement-durable) and GESTe (http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/unites-de-recherche/details/unit/gestion-de-lenvironnement-societe-et-territoire). Both these units currently group expertise in Ecologic al Economics and Environmental Governance (Prof. Tom Bauler; http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/equipe/details/person/tom-bauler/), Environmental Impact Assessment & Management (Prof. Wouter Achten; http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/equipe/details/person/wouter-achten/) and Territorial Approaches to environmental protection (Prof. Marie-Françoise Godart; http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/equipe/details/person/marie-francoise-godart/). The integrated research unit will regroup around 30 researchers of different disciplinary backgrounds and will be the main animator of the ULB’s Master in Environmental Management & Sciences (http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/enseignements/master-en-sciences-et-gestion-de-l-environnement/), a major education program for environmental issues in Belgium. Along with SENSE’s research program, the Master itself will be subject to a collective reconfiguration along the integration of strong sustainability, problem-based learning and systems’ approaches.

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\(^1\) “Sustainability science’ is problem-driven, interdisciplinary scholarship that seeks to facilitate the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective interventions that foster shared prosperity and reduced poverty while protecting the environment. It is defined by the problems it addresses rather than the disciplines it employs. It thus draws as needed from multiple disciplines of the natural, social, medical and engineering sciences, from the professions, and from the knowledge of practice”. (Harvard SusSci program description, 2008)
Research domain and field:

The profile is oriented to recruit a colleague with a research experience situated in the understanding of citizens/individuals/consumers as actors in societal, sustainability-oriented transition and transformation processes, be the latter wanted, imagined, governed or forced upon actors. The candidate should demonstrate research activities in the strong sustainability domain centered on the analyses at micro-levels (individuals, consumers, citizens) or meso-levels (collectives, movements, groups, initiatives, networks), while in the same time being able to link these to developments at macro-levels, for instance by questioning institutional or societal structures, or developing governance aspects. Research foci such as on behavioural change and their relation to perceptions or discourse, coproduction of imaginaries, reaction to the deployment of policy instruments and tools, adhesion to social movements or contestation, alternative practice dynamics, citizen science processes would be – among many others – lines of investigations which fulfil perfectly the intended direction.

The profile excludes any mono-disciplinary approaches, and calls for candidates who anchor their work in approaches lend from the social and human sciences (in the wider sense) in order to investigate conditions or characteristics of strong sustainability by deploying pedagogical and research competences that are resolutely inter- and/or transdisciplinary. A focus on European societies, possibly in their urban context, would facilitate the candidate’s future relation to existing in-house competences and fields of investigation, and could help to address the micro/meso systemics. Conversely, a focus on socio-ecological interdependencies and system’s transformation would complement our existing competences in economic-environmental systems.

Research objectives:

It is expected from the candidate to pursue an original research activity within her/his field of expertise, enriching his/her competences and networks and following her/his centres of interest. A direct interest in societal questions and socio-political evolutions is equally expected, be it to tackle emerging and persistent environmental problems and evolutions, or to address the voiced needs of our contemporary societies to envision the wider transitions and transformations. The candidate should be ready to consolidate his/her base in existing international or European research networks and collaborations. S/he should equally be ready to acquire a series of research projects with the main financing authorities (Belgian-FNRS, Belgian-federal BELSPO, Brussels-regional Innoviris, European DG RTD…) and to develop her/his research group in the mid-term. These research activities and wider collaborative efforts are meant to contribute actively to shape the future development of the collective research unit (Socio-ENvironmental Systems’ (r)Evolutions –SENSE) in collaboration with the research unit’s co-pilots (Profs. Achten, Bauler, Godart).

Teaching objectives:

The candidate will participate to the teaching, organisation, configuration and administration of the Master in Environmental Management & Sciences (http://igeat.ulb.ac.be/fr/enseignements/master-en-sciences-et-gestion-de-l-environnement/). Given the Master itself will undergo a major collaborative restructuration – also in line with the future colleague’s expectations and competences, the teaching and monitoring tasks are bound to evolve in order to reinforce students’ competences in strong sustainability, systemic approaches and methods, and inter-/transdisciplinary methods.

- The colleague will be sole responsible of a new Master 1 course inspired by her/his scientific field of investigation. The course “Socio-Environmental Dynamics” (lecture; 36hours/year) will involve a larger audience of MA students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds (social and natural sciences).
• Within the collaborative 4-headed “Questions approfondies de gestion d’environnement” (ENVI-F-5001; https://www.ulb.be/fr/programme/envi-f5001), the candidate organizes a research-oriented seminar at Master 2 level for a limited number of students on his/her own research perspectives.

• The colleague will coordinate with Prof. M-F Godart - in daily interaction with 2 full-time teaching assistants - a seminar and workshop to help students develop their scientific and academic method-oriented competences. The “Projet interdisciplinaire 1” (ENVI-F-422) (MA1) also comprises a field trip (https://www.ulb.be/fr/programme/envi-f422).

• Together with Profs. W. Achten, T. Bauler and R. Weikmans, and 2 dedicated teaching assistants, the colleague participates to steer a number of MA2 student working groups along the lines of problem-based learning methods. The “Projet interdisciplinaire 2” (ENVI-F-501; https://www.ulb.be/fr/programme/envi-f501) asks students to engage with research missions and questions which stem directly from civil society, societal initiatives, administrations or the private sector.

• An important part of the pedagogical objectives are linked to the scientific coordination and guidance of a series of master dissertations, which follow original interdisciplinary research questions and methods along the lines of investigation and expertise of our future colleague.

Qualifications required:

The candidate will have obtained with success a PhD-thesis. The position does explicitly not privilege a disciplinary orientation; the PhD diploma could indeed originate from faculties of social sciences, natural sciences, applied sciences or any other. The thesis should however be grounded in or linked to the wider domain of environmental humanities. It should be anchored theory-wise or show marks of approaches and/or methods from social and human sciences in the wider sense, including for instance sociology, anthropology, philosophy, political sciences, economics, psychology and others.

Skills required

• You have strong feelings about forging teaching- and research-activities for a world in transformation.
• You are convinced that academic endeavours call for collaborative efforts.
• You are excited to participate to reconfigure our research and teaching activities.
• You have a good capacity to manage your own research priorities and deadlines within the wider engagements with colleagues’ and students’ agendas.
• Applicants should have at least 4 years of research experience at the time of their recruitment.
• Post-doctoral experience and an excellent scientific record are a plus.
• Exchange periods outside of the applicants’ home institution (during or after their PhD) will be taken into consideration when evaluating applications.
• Applicants who do not speak French (level B2) may be granted a period of adaptation, but they must be able to teach in French and interact with different authorities (university or exterior) in French at the end of the third year following their appointment.

Interested?

For more information, please contact Tom Bauler and/or Wouter Achten (telephone: +32 2 650.49.24 or 43.22 – E-mails: tbauler@ulb.ac.be or wachten@ulb.ac.be). Applications must be sent by e-mail to the rectorate of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (recteur@ulb.ac.be) and to the faculty deanship (doyen.sciences@ulb.ac.be).
They must include the following:

- an application letter
- a Curriculum vitae including a list of publications (a template can be downloaded at https://www.ulb.be/fr/documents-officiels/completer-votre-cv-en-ligne)
- any relevant documents showing 4 years of research experience
- a research note: a report/proposal (max. 8,500 characters, 5 pages) presenting the applicant’s past research activities and her/his research project over the next 5-10 years. This note should include prospects on how the candidate expects to integrate his research domains into the upcoming research unit “Socio-ENvironmental Systems’ (r)Evolutions – SENSE”.
- a teaching dossier: a note (max. 7,000 characters, 4 pages) detailing the applicant’s previous teaching activities and presenting a teaching project for the first five years in this position. This note should include prospects and concrete proposals for his/her interpretation of and insertion into the teaching tasks and objectives mentioned above and linked to the Master in Environmental Management & Sciences.
- a note on the applicant's international achievements and projects (no more than 4 pages).
- the names and e-mail addresses of five referees (respecting the gender balance) who may be contacted by those in charge of evaluating applications. These referees should not have conflicts of interest because of family or emotional ties.

The appointment to the academic staff of ULB is made at “Premier Assistant” level, if the candidate has had a PhD for less than eight years (on 1 October of the year of appointment). If the candidate has had a PhD for eight or more years, on 1 October of the year of appointment, then the appointment is made at “Chargé de Cours” level. As of their appointment, members of academic staff are authorised to use the honorary title of “Professeur”.

By sending in their application, applicants acknowledge they have read and understood the additional information and the regulations relevant to academic staff, available at the following address http://www.ulb.ac.be/emploi/academique.html.