

Unique funded MSc thesis (and/or internship) opportunity related to SNV biogas project, Cameroon

The challenge

Energy transitions in the past have been key to many of the economic, social and environmental changes that we associate with modern society. Energy technology however, does not operate in isolation, and projects in rural areas of the developing world often need to compensate for lack of strong formal (government, market) institutions. Many of these projects still underestimate how the social meaning attached to technology can affect how it is used and understood, and ultimately whether or not projects are successful in supporting wider energy transitions. This is especially true in rural Cameroon where there is a rich and prominent set of highly localized socio-cultural institutions influencing household decision making. How can we do justice to local social and informal institutions in designing technology projects?

The project

Your work would be built on the back of a project led by the Development Economics Group (DEC) at Wageningen University and SNV Cameroon. The project is near completion (2013- July 2015), with 110 out of 250 household biodigesters already built in Adamawa, central-northern Cameroon. DEC was tasked with investigating the effects of subsidies on the uptake of domestic biogas, and has collected a huge amount of data in hundreds of villages. This data might not be relevant to your analysis, but will enable you to select a representative sample of case studies on which to focus your analysis.

You are free to choose your own topic, in coordination with DEC and the Environmental Policy Group (ENP). Possible topics/directions include:

- Inter-ethnic dynamics in the adoption process;
- Power and social relationships in the adoption process;
- Influence of biodigesters on household dynamics and the daily life of women;
- Evidence of new technology applications, customization and improvements to meet local needs and preferences, and market development for parts and services.

If selected, DEC/ENP will cover your travels to Cameroon, in addition to (part of) the fieldwork expenses, depending on the nature of your project.

When?

- Preferred start of field work is end of March/beginning of April 2015, for a minimum period of 2-3 months, but dates are negotiable.

Who should apply?

- You are fluent in English and have strong command of French
- You are happy diving headfirst into a unique local cultural context
- You possess good writing skills
- You are confident and can work independently if necessary

Who would you be working with?

- Mattijs Smits (Associate Professor, ENP) – Mattijs works on Energy and Climate at the Environmental Policy group at Wageningen University, and would be your main supervisor.
- Niccolò Meriggi (PhD candidate, DEC) – Niccolò spearheads DEC's research efforts, and would support you logistically and in the field, and be your co- supervisor
- Anna Harnmeijer (Research Associate, Scene Consulting / University of Helsinki) - Scene Consulting is a social enterprise and was brought on to build a web- based platform for monitoring and evaluation for this project.

How to apply?

- Send a short motivation statement and your CV to both Mattijs Smits (mattijs.smits@wur.nl) and Anna Harnmeijer (anna.h@sceneconsulting.com)
- Deadline is 31/01/2015, successful applicants will be contacted shortly after.

If you have any questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Mattijs Smits (mattijs.smits@wur.nl)