SEERC – Call for PhD Applications 2011-2012.

PhD Studentships at SEERC – Call for Applications (Deadline: May 13th 2011)

1. The PhD programme

The PhD programme is run jointly by the University of Sheffield and CITY College – International Faculty of the University of Sheffield, under a joint supervision scheme. The programme is hosted by the South East European Research Centre (SEERC) in Thessaloniki, Greece.

At SEERC there are currently two possibilities for a PhD degree:

Full Time programme: The duration is 3 years and it requires full time commitment on the part of the PhD student, which means that one would have to be physically present at SEERC premises located in Thessaloniki.

Part Time programme: with duration 6 years. To be eligible for a part-time PhD the candidate should be able to prove significant experience in the selected field. In this case, the PhD student has the obligation for a minimum of two visits to Thessaloniki annually for supervision purposes (with the CITY and Sheffield supervisors). All other communication with supervisors occurs via e-mail, Skype and telephone.

Part of the PhD programme involves the Doctoral Development Programme (DDP). The DDP concerns both Full Time and Part Time Student. Its main target is to enhance and broad the range of skills of the PhD candidates. Further information on the DDP can be found at the following link: http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/development_team/ddp

2. Tuition Fees

The fees for the PhD for 2010-2011 are **7300 British pounds annually** for full-time study and **3650 British pounds** for the part time programme (a small increase is expected every year on fees. Exact figures will be given to successful applicants).

Fee Waivers: Once again this year, the University of Sheffield will be offering a small number of fee waiver positions for students to obtain PhDs **through SEERC in Thessaloniki**. The fee waivers are offered to applicants with outstanding academic records and the process is highly competitive. More information on the terms of reference of the Fee waivers can be found at the following link: http://www.seerc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=60

3. Submission process

We accept proposals from qualified students, for Full-time or for Part-time study. The proposals should address the **specific research topics** as listed in the table below (for detailed description, please see section 5).

Research Track 1: Enterprise Innovation and Development	
Topic 1:	Exploring the Impact of Complex Adaptive Leadership in SME Innovation

Topic 2:	Strategy formulating of multinationals in South East Europe: Prior to, during and after the financial crisis
Topic 3:	Knowledge management framework for resilient supply chain
Topic 4:	High Performance Working Systems and Organisational Performance in MNCs in South Eastern Europe
Research Track 2: Information and Communication Technologies	
Topic 5:	Engineering Emergence in Artificial Distributed Systems for Energy and the Environment
Research Track 3: Society & Human Development Psychology, Politics, Sociology, and Education	
Topic 6:	Social Cognition
Topic 7:	Culture & Society in SE Europe

In order to apply, PhD candidates need to download the **Application Form** along with the **Guidance Notes** from SEERC's web site[1], complete the application, and then send, by post, one copy to SEERC and one copy to The University of Sheffield.

Please note that incomplete applications will be disqualified from the process. Candidates have to ensure that all supporting documentation is included in the application. The application form and supporting documents should be accompanied by a **Research Proposal** and an updated **CV**.

The **Research Proposal** should be typed, the length should be about 1,500 – 2,000 words (6 to 8 pages) and should include the following:

a) Title of the proposed thesis

b) Reference to one of the Specific Research Topics (section 5)

c) Proposed mode of work (full time or part time)

d) Background to research topic

e) Specific problem(s) to be examined

f) Methods of research proposal, plan and timetable of work

g) Resources available and required (if any)

h) Any other information in support of your proposal

i) The proposal should include correct literature citations and a brief bibliography

All applications should be submitted by May 13th 2011 (postmarked). Please note that the complete application forms need to be sent to **both** SEERC and The University of Sheffield at the **same** time by ordinary post. Moreover, **an electronic version of the Research proposal and the CV should be sent by May 13th 2011 by email to SEERC at phd_admissions@seerc.org.**

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[1] http://www.seerc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=59

Please note that incomplete applications missing one or more documents or failure to submit the hard copies of the application by post (i.e. submission only of the proposal in electronic form) to SEERC and to the University of Sheffield will result to the application's disqualifying.

The possible outcomes of your application are:

- Acceptance to read for a PhD
- Acceptance to read for a PhD with a fee waiver
- Rejection

All candidates will be informed on the outcome of the evaluation procedure, which will involve an interview at SEERC premises with the proposed supervisors.

A step-by-step guide to submitting your application	
Step 1:	Read in detail the requirements from this Call for Proposals
Step 2:	Download the application form from http://www.seerc.org
Step 3:	Read the Guidance Notes for completing it
Step 4:	Prepare Research Proposal and an Updated CV according to Guidelines
Step 5:	Prepare supporting documents for inclusion in the application pack
Step 6:	Send by post 1 copy of the application documents to SEERC and 1 copy to the University of Sheffield. Do this by **May 13th 2011** (post stamp as proof of validity of the application).
Step 7:	Send by **May 13th 2011** the Research proposal and the updated CV by e-mail to phd_admissions@seerc.org

4. English Language Requirements

For Research Topics # 1-4 (Research Track 1) see the English language requirements of Management School English at The University of Sheffield: http://www.shef.ac.uk/management/researchstudies/entry.html

For Research Topic # 5 (Research Track 2) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Computer Science of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/info/englang.html

For Research Topic # 6 (Research Track 3) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Psychology of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/psychology/prospectivepg/phd

For Research Topic # 7 (Research Track 3) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Politics of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/politics/prospectivepg/research/apply.html

5. Research Topics

Topic # 1: Exploring the Impact of Complex Adaptive Leadership in SME Innovation

Proposed supervisors:

- Dr. Tim Vorley (tim.vorley@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr. Alexandros G. Psychogios (a.psychogios@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Family businesses have been regarded as the backbone of a free economy system and vehicle for market development (Poutziouris et al., 1997). The scale of family business activities in developed countries suggest that, on average, three out of four companies are family controlled, representing almost half of the employment and nearly half of the GDP activity (Harvey, 1994). Entrepreneurial literature recognises that there are differences in entrepreneurial and managerial behaviour between family and non-family businesses. Innovation literature is yet to define what innovation means for firms and in particular, for SMEs. Just like, any other firms, SMEs will have to respond to globalisation challenges and increasing competition at home and abroad. Innovation is a vehicle that will lead to improved business performance and enables a firm to gain a competitive advantage in the market place. Therefore, this research project aims not only, to fill a literature gap by examining what determines innovation in SMEs, but also what are the characteristics of SME innovativeness as well as the complex leadership behaviour and its effectiveness on SMEs innovation process. In particular, what will be investigated is ways of working and culture or the internal environment that contributes to innovation and complex managers/leaders' attitudes towards innovation in family firm compared to non-family firms. The main epistemological approach of this project will be the post-modern one, emphasising, among else, complexity and chaos theory. In particular, the issues that will be explored are associated with images and concepts of complexity, knowledge, learning and innovation. In addition, key-issues that can be examined are:

- Innovation process used in SMEs
- Complex adaptive leadership
- Emergence, feedback loops, history, change and strange attractors
- Creativity (among organisational members)
- Business Environment dynamic issues that could affect innovative behaviour
- Risk-taking culture that contributes to either facilitating or hindering innovative behaviour
- Organisational learning

The project will focus on the main three industries namely, manufacturing, services and retailing. Innovative SMEs are to be identified within these industries. The geographical context of analysis will be the South Eastern European one that is characterized by a high degree of turbulence and complexity. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be applied. Research techniques like survey-questionnaire in managers and employees, as well as in-depth interviews with owners/business leaders, plus observations can be used.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate will have a good first degree (Class 2:1 or above) and a Master level qualification in social science area related to management/business studies, marketing, economics/finance. The candidate needs to have an excellent knowledge of English (IELST 7). Also, the candidate needs to be enthusiastic, hard working, well-organised and able to prioritise work demands. She/he needs to work in a full-time basis. Previous research experience would be an advantage as with knowledge of SPSS, and qualitative data analysis software packages. Full research training will be provided.

Topic # 2: Strategy Formulation of Multinationals in South-East Europe: Prior to, During, and After the Financial Crisis

Proposed supervisors:

- Prof. Mehmet Demirbag (M.Demirbag@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Leslie Szamosi (szamosi@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

The impact of multinationals (MNC's) within the global economy is well documented. Also well documented is the general 'creep' of MNC's from their home markets, to other developed economies and then into emerging markets. The literature today is very clearly focused on the opportunities for such companies in emerging markets with the focus on countries such as China and India. Less well documented within this context is the growing influence and proliferation of MNC's within South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

Following the collapse of communism, the movement toward 'free market economies', and the accession towards European Union integration, MNC's have turned their sights towards SEE. The impact of foreign direct investment within the region is well documented (e.g., Bitzenis, 2008). MNCs' market entry modes have been studied for some countries in the region (Demirbag et al., 2007; 2008), but countries in the SEE region have been found to have different types of institutional infrastructure (Mellahi et al., 2009). What is unclear and unstudied is: how MNC's formulate their business strategy within the region, whether these are different or similar to other emerging markets, how strategy is implemented at the local level; and, the influence of the mother company within the SEE subsidiary. Overall, do MNC's strategize SEE as a region or as a set of distinct emerging markets? Are there differences in these views depending on MNC sector (e.g., banking, pharmaceuticals, construction).

Some possible avenues of research may include (prior to, and post the financial crisis):

- Do MNC's formulate global, regionalized or localized strategic plans within the region?
- Are there common elements to the strategic plans within MNCs throughout the region?

- What aspects of MNC strategy are open to regionalization / localization and what are considered as 'not touchable' within the region?

- How MNCs decide on location of activities for SEE region.

- Regional integration, knowledge transfer and reverse knowledge transfer between subsidiaries of MNEs in the region.

- Do MNC's develop strategic 'clusters' within the region in terms of how they approach them?

- Can a model of MNC strategic formation within the region be developed?

Candidate's profile:

Good academic background with a Masters level qualification from a good quality institution. An excellent level of English both spoken and written to meet University of Sheffield regulations would be required. Also, an appropriate level of both quantitative and qualitative research skills would be a very positive element. Candidates that have had extensive career experience especially in the HR field (rather than purely academic experience) would have an advantage.

Topic # 3: Knowledge management framework for resilient supply chain

Proposed Supervisors:

- Dr Alok K. Choudhary (A.Choudhary@sheffield.ac.uk)

- Prof. Panagiotis Ketikidis (Ketikidis@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Supply chains are becoming more and more global, networked and information centric. The volume of information is growing at an unprecedented rate in the supply chain. Efficient and effective supply chain requires capturing, sharing, analyzing and managing these information and knowledge along the supply chain network. However, this is extremely challenging and there are number of dimensions along which the complexity arises including Uncertainty and risks, information inaccuracy, information sharing etc. To succeed in today's highly competitive market and complex economic climate; businesses must be flexible, resilient and prepared to deal with uncertainty and risk in order to operate efficiently and effectively in global environments. In addition, effective and efficient supply chain requires sharing of information and knowledge along the supply chain.

To achieve this, ICT systems used for managing the supply chain must interact efficiently, share information, they must be interoperable and actors must be enabled to share that information according to their own business rules. Industry representatives have indicated that if the supply chain efficiency has to be improved and environmental impact to be reduced, a paradigm shift is required in this domain. Collecting and aggregating supply chain information is of fundamental importance for every organization in order to gain competitiveness and to reduce costs. Such needs are common to a large part of the manufacturing supply chain, including car companies, aerospace companies, electronic appliances producers and many others. In each case it may change the scale of the supply chain and the type of products, but

the problem of capturing, sharing, analysing and managing the large amount of information is common.

If a supply chain is to be resilient and well-prepared to deal with uncertainty and risk in its global markets, it requires accurate, current and understandable knowledge about different partners, current status of its work and operations. This knowledge must be trustworthy and therefore it is also vitally important that the enterprises also understand the levels of reliability, uncertainty and risk that exist within the available knowledge. Information and knowledge sharing that can promote the development of a high level "supply chain intelligence" pertaining to the identification, analysis and evaluation of risks in the supply chain. Knowledge management can facilitate supply chain collaborative learning and the development of knowledge about risk.

The objective of this PhD work will be to develop a knowledge management framework by application and development of intelligent ICT (e.g. web 2.0, cloud computing, future internet etc) for capturing, analysing, sharing and managing the supply chain information leading to resilient supply chain.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate will have a good first degree (Class 2:1 or above) and a Master level qualification in Engineering, Computer Science or Management Science. The candidate should have a strong IT background. Prior experience of coding in C++ or Java will be advantageous. The candidate needs to have an excellent knowledge of English (IELST 7). Also, the candidate needs to be enthusiastic, hard working, well-organised and able to prioritise work demands. She/he needs to work in a full-time basis. Previous research experience would be an advantage as with knowledge of knowledge and information management although not compulsory. Full research training will be provided.

Topic # 4: High Performance Working Systems and Organisational Performance in MNCs in South Eastern Europe

Proposed supervisors:

- Professor Mehmet Demirbag (M.Demirbag@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Athina Vasilaki (avasilaki@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

There is a growing consensus that High Performance Working Systems (HPWS) have a positive effect on Multinational companies (MNCs) organisational performance as they can become a source of competitive advantage for multinational organisations. HPWS fulfill employees' needs as they create positive behaviours (Petrescu and Simmons, 2008) and result in commitment with the organization and in improved performance as well as employee wellbeing (Guest, 2002). There is a growing consensus that if HPWS are implemented properly then they provide a direct and economically significant contribution to organisational performance. However, recent research (Fey et al, 2009) has shown that there is insufficient understanding on the role of these practices in MNCs, which leaves a gap in the literature to be investigated further.

Therefore, the broader aim of this PhD is to investigate which of the HPWS are applicable in MNCs. In doing so, potential students could investigate:

- If classic Western management systems and practices can be applied in the context of SSE and if yes, what is their impact on organisational performance
- If in the SEE context, there are moderators or mediators in the relationship between HPWS and organisational performance
- How to measure the effect of HPWS in MNCs, is there a need for other performance indicators specific to the MNCs context

The project can focus mainly in manufacturing and services industries. The geographical analysis will be South Eastern Europe as it provides an interesting context were markets are characterised by a high degree of turbulence, volatility and complexity. Students can apply both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to investigate the area. Research techniques like survey-questionnaire in managers and employees, as well as in-depth interviews with leaders, plus observations can be used.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate will have a good first degree (Class 2:1 or above) and a Master level qualification in social science area related to management/business studies, marketing, economics/finance. The candidate needs to have an excellent knowledge of English (IELST 7). Also, the candidate needs to be enthusiastic, hard working, well-organised and able to prioritise work demands. She/he needs to work in a full-time basis. Previous research experience would be an advantage as with knowledge of SPSS, and qualitative data analysis software packages. Full research training will be provided.

Topic # 5: Engineering Emergence in Artificial Distributed Systems for Energy and the Environment

Proposed supervisor:

- Dr George Eleftherakis (eleftherakis@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

The last two decades the complexity or scale of some applications rose so fast that a single machine could not handle. The client server paradigm became unable to respond to the user demands in a reliable and efficient manner. Centralized systems are prone to a single point of failure and their overall efficiency was affected by the bottlenecks on the server side.

Two are the main advantages that distributed architectures offer compared to centralised approaches; avoidance of the single point failure problem and better scalability and utilisation of resources. Therefore it seems natural that in recent years systems operating within distributed environments have experienced considerable growth in size and diversity.

At the same time the development of Grid environments, the shift to service oriented architectures, the increased interconnectivity between computer networks, cloud computing, the introduction of the Internet of things leading to an explosive increase of the number of computers connected, moved distributed systems beyond the initial

application of facilitating file exchange to a much broader range of domains. But all these led to an increased demand for complex and scalable applications. In order to cope with this demand modern distributed applications must: be able to easily scale up to any number of nodes required; maintain availability even under extremely dynamic conditions; enable efficient discovery of resources in highly dynamic conditions; be able to adopt to the diverse user demands and conditions in the network; maintain a desired level of security in all aspects of operation; require minimal human configuration and management.

Different approaches and architectures in the past offered solutions and satisfied several of these requirements and some hybrid approaches attempted to increase the number of the issues resolved. The last years there is a trend to be inspired by natural systems by introducing bio-inspired properties and behaviours, so that a distributed environment could become a complex adaptive system, in the sense that adaptation, resilience and self-organization will emerge as a result of simple interactions between peers.

In parallel, an increasing part of the world-wide energy supply is coming from distributed generation of electricity of different sources of electric power. Thus power distribution networks could evolve from a centrally and hierarchically controlled structure into a very big and totally distributed network.

The aim of this work will be to investigate all the above mentioned areas and propose a generic bio-inspired solution based on a set of emergent self-optimising structures and processes which will be the major catalyst for efficiency, scalability and adaptability in a (fully) distributed network. The case study that will be used to demonstrate the applicability of the approach should be taken from the energy and environment domain and could be the control of a distributed energy supply network that would probably require no human interaction or autonomous control of energy for intelligent homes or buildings, waste management etc.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate should possess a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Computer Science or Engineering or other relevant discipline and have a rather strong mathematical background. It is normally expected that the mode of study is F/T.

Topic 6: Social Cognition

Proposed Supervisors:

- Dr Angelos Rodafinos (rodafinos@city.academic.gr)
- Dr Peter Harris (P.Harris@sheffield.ac.uk)

Proposed area of research:

People's responses to health-risk information are often subject to unrealistic optimism and other biases. As a result, they tend to underestimate the risk involved in adverse health behaviours such as smoking, drinking, doping, sun tanning, etc. Self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) offers a sound theoretical basis for reducing personal biases and increasing the acceptance of health-related messages. This project may explore risk behaviours, substance use, behaviour change, health promotion campaigns, and other issues viewed from a more general health and social cognition perspective. The successful candidate may examine a) the underlying

attitudes and social norms, b) individual responses to health information, and c) theory-driven and evidence-based interventions for behavioural change.

The suggested research topic is a follow-up to the Smoking Prevention in the Balkans (SPiB) and the Determinants of Intentions for Doping In Sports (DIDIS) projects, which have been funded by Cancer Research UK and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), respectfully. It will advance both Sheffield and City departments' research in social psychology. The suggested field of research fits well with the EU Public Health programme and the call for preparatory action in the field of sports of the European Commission, and as such it will significantly increase the in house potential for EU funding.

Candidate's Profile:

The candidate must hold an MSc or equivalent degree with top performance in Psychology or a related discipline. The candidate must be fluent in written and spoken English, have strong computer literacy, and advanced working knowledge of quantitative or mixed research methods and statistical analyses.
Desirable skills and attributes include excellent communication skills, self-motivation and hard working habits, the ability to work both independently and as a team player in local and international research environments, and publications in conferences and/or scientific journals.
Full time candidates will be preferred.

Topic 7: Culture & Society in SE Europe

Proposed supervisors:

- Dr Charles Lees (C.S.J.Lees@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Victor Roudometov (roudomet@ucy.ac.cy)

Proposed area of research:

The study of the cultural and social aspects of South-eastern European societies has to dispel past images of backwardness and to examine the similarities and differences of the region in comparative, cross-national and often historical perspective. Relevant themes for consideration include: the direction and character of nationalism, the relationship between the State, society and various minorities, the institution of civil society, developments in political culture, the role of religion (Orthodoxy and minority faiths) in the post-1989 period, the challenges of religious pluralism for local societies and the actions & reactions of the various national Churches vis-à-vis the idea of Europe, Church-State separation, etc.

Candidate's profile:

Preferred candidates should have knowledge of more than one area languages (in addition to English). They should have earned undergraduate degrees in a social scientific field (politics, anthropology, history, international relations, religious studies, cultural studies etc.) Ideally, they should also have a graduate level degree (MA) in one of the aforementioned disciplines or related interdisciplinary fields.

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