



Job title: 2 PhD-positions Social Science (Organization Science) 'Enhancing smart disaster governance: Assessing the potential of the net-centric approach.'

Fte: 1.0

VU unit: FSW

Vacancy number: 14296

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VU University Amsterdam is one of the leading institutions for higher education in Europe and aims to be inspiring, innovative, and committed to societal welfare. It comprises twelve faculties and has teaching facilities for 25,000 students.

The Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) is one of the larger faculties of the VU-University. Over 2700 students and more than 300 employees are engaged in teaching and research on social-science issues. The faculty has 5 bachelor and 7 master programs, which are characterized by their broad and often multidisciplinary character. The department of Organization Sciences focuses on the processes and phenomena that result in effective and efficient functioning of organizations. Among the topics studied are networks, change, culture, identity and strategy.

For this specific research project 'Enhancing smart disaster governance: Assessing the potential of the net-centric approach', the department of Organization Sciences received a grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific research (NWO). The project is co-financed by a consortium of national and international project partners, including four Safety Regions ('Veiligheidsregio's'), the project group Netcentrisch Werken, the Police National Operational Center (Politie Dienst Landelijk Operationeel Centrum, DLOC), and Oxfam Novib, Cordaid and CrisisMappers. Leiden University (prof.dr. Arjen Boin) and the University of Tilburg (dr. Bartel van de Walle) are academic partners of the project.

The project aims to identify innovative and effective disaster response practices. We are especially interested in the role that netcentric governance can play in improving disaster responses. Netcentric governance is defined as the organization of a response to disasters by making use of self-directed networks of heterogeneous stakeholders, in an environment enabled by shared technological and organizational infrastructure. The project will examine whether and how net-centric governance offers an alternative for formal top-down command and control practices, by drawing on the potential of citizens' community networks. The main research question is "What is the potential for net-centric governance to disaster management in facilitating a more adaptive response, and what are the consequences for the connections between networks of response organizations and local communities?"

Netcentric governance will be studied in two different social contexts. The first, international context is humanitarian work that represents weak governmental response structures, but ample involvement with emergent, citizen-based communication structures mediated for instance through social media. The second, Dutch context represents a densely regulated governmental response structure, but less experience integrating bottom-up forms of disaster response. The project seeks to identify how these two forms can be better integrated.

The research question central to the **first PhD project** is: “How can heterogeneous information networks be mapped, interpreted and governed to make humanitarian response operations more adaptive?” The PhD candidate will analyze information streams in the context of humanitarian disaster relief. This comprises two historical case analyses (Haiti earthquake & Philippines typhoon), combining (quantitative) semantic and social network analysis of crowd-empowered platforms, as well as (qualitative) ethnographic studies, i.e. semi-structured interviews and on-site observations as part of quick-response research to natural disasters and similar unanticipated events. These analyses will help to visualize and interpret network patterns, both in terms of content and actors, revealing which governance mechanisms enable or inhibit adaptive network collaboration.

The research question central to the **second PhD project** is: “How can heterogeneous information networks be mapped, interpreted and governed to make netcentric response more adaptive?” The PhD candidate will conduct ethnographic studies in emergency response rooms and decision making teams among our partnering Safety Regions, combined with a multi-layered network analysis (including social media), to chart patterns in information streams among and between different networks involved in (and outside) the response operation. This will provide insight into the local work practices in the response rooms combined with community responses through the use of social media.

The PhD candidates will work closely together with the project’s post doc researcher. The post doc will integrate the results of the project and identify whether and how adaptive responses take place, and which governance mechanisms support adaptive capacity. This part of the project focuses on local communities and authorities in both the Dutch and humanitarian contexts.

Tasks

PhD candidates are expected to:

- Execute their projects in the framework of the NWO-proposal;
- Collaborate in a multidisciplinary research team;
- Write articles for international peer reviewed scientific journals;
- Write a PhD thesis;
- Assist in organizing project-related workshops seminars, and partner meetings, and contribute to (formal and informal) publicity and reporting;
- Participate in Graduate School courses in support of their research (to a total of 30 ects).

Requirements

- MSc in social and/or behavioral sciences, preferably a (two years) Research Master, in a relevant discipline (such as Organization Sciences, Public Administration, Disaster and Crisis Management, Communications, Sociology, Business Administration, Information Systems, etc.; other disciplines welcome upon motivation of relevance to the topic.);
- Strong interest in ethnographic field studies, network research, use of technology, and the research topics described above;
- Ability to work together in a project team;
- Prepared to travel and spend time abroad in field conditions;
- Both PhD research candidates need to be highly proficient in spoken and written English, and for the second position also in Dutch;
- Full-time employment is preferred (or a minimum of 0.8 fte).

Employment information

The initial appointment will be for 1 year. After satisfactory evaluation of the initial appointment, it can be extended for a total duration of 4 years. The candidate will participate in the PhD programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The starting date is the 1th of November 2014 but no later than January 2014. You can find information about our excellent fringe benefits of employment at www.workingatvu.nl, including:

- remuneration of 8,3% end-of-year bonus and 8% holiday allowance;
- a minimum of 29 vacation days (in case of full-time employment);
- generous contribution (70%) commuting allowance based on public transport;
- discounts on collective insurances (healthcare- and car insurance).

Salary

The salary is €2,083 gross per month in the first year, increasing to €2,664 (salary scale 85) in the fourth year based on full-time employment.

Information

For additional information, please contact the project leader, Dr. Ir. Kees Boersma (f.k.boersma@vu.nl), or Prof. Dr. Peter Groenewegen (p.groenewegen@vu.nl).

Application

Applicants are requested to write a one-page letter in which they describe their abilities and motivation, accompanied by a curriculum vitae and one or two references. The written applications, mentioning the vacancy number in the e-mail header or at the top left of the letter and envelope, should be submitted before October 9, 2014 to VU University Amsterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences, attn. Mrs. Dr. J.G.M. Reuling, managing director, de Boelelaan 1081, 1081 HV Amsterdam or preferably by e-mail to: vacature.org.fsw@vu.nl

Any other correspondence in response to this advertisement will not be dealt with.