

**One PhD scholarship and one Postdoctoral scholarship on
the Social and Solidarity Economy and Critical Theory**

University of Liège (Belgium), Faculty of Social Sciences (FaSS)

Applications are invited for scholarships to work at doctoral and post-doctoral level as part of the *Critical Solidarity Economy* project (Crésol).

Application deadline: **10th April 2018**. Start date: **between 1st June and 1st July 2018**

Positions:

One doctoral position: full-time, fixed-term position available for 2 years
(+1)

One post-doctoral position: full-time, fixed-term position available for 2 years
(+1)

General information:

- **Objective of the project:**

The scholarships are attached to the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) Incentive Grant for Scientific Research (IGSR) for the project, *Critical Solidarity Economy* (Criésol) led by Dr Bruno Frère. This project aims to extend to Greece sociological research methodology recently built to study the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in France. It is designed to help resolve impasses faced by mainstream approaches to understanding the social and solidarity economy, taking into account the justifications and states of mind of participants in this economic activity themselves. The challenge is simultaneously to improve a new analytical tool, to understand the ideological and economic contradictions of the social and solidarity economy and to assess the role that it could play in the economic crisis. If the team reaches the second stage of an ERC application then the IGSR project will be financed by the FNRS. If not, it will be funded by the Principal Investigator and his team.

Research Environment of the project :

The Faculty of Social Sciences (FaSS) of the University of Liège is a small and dynamic faculty committed to developing research that reaches beyond Belgian borders, as shown by its two recently-awarded ERC grants and its involvement in numerous FP and Horizon 2020 research projects. Researchers hired to work on the Criésol project will be members of Cléo, a team part of whose research focuses on epistemology, critical theory, political sociology

and philosophy, social movements and the solidarity economy. Beyond their involvement in Criésol, researchers will be expected to participate in the intellectual life of FaSS and the Cléo research centre (the centre's research seminar, the faculty seminar, etc.) and teach on the Master's Degrees in sociology and the sociology of work.

- **Description of the project:**

Alongside its core focus on opinion surveys and methodology, research conducted by Cléo so far has mainly been in epistemology and sociological theory. As a close collaborator with the Groupe de Recherche Politique et Morale, founded by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, Cléo contributed to the evolution of a new sociological style, which is referred to today as pragmatic sociology or the sociology *of* critique. This form of sociology, whose principal goal is to take the actors (and their sense of justice) seriously when conducting sociological investigations, had a considerable influence on Cléo's fieldwork, which until then had principally been informed by phenomenological conceptual tools imported from philosophy. In a series of articles Cléo's members indicated why, if one cannot escape the critical stance that it entails, Bourdieusian genetic structuralism cannot result in a reflexive sociology that, like pragmatic sociology, does not confine social actors within the *illusio*. By joining the heuristic model of this pragmatic sociology's famous "Cités" to the phenomenology of Husserl, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty, their latest work (since 2010) has sought to uncover the different senses of justice and diverse common goods that have always coexisted at the very centre of the SSE, and which explain why its organisations have never combined forces politically.

A similar fragmentation prevailed in the 19th century, when

associationist socialism failed within the French Section of the Workers' International even though its canonical texts clearly stated its desire for a revolutionary economy structured around several homogenous common goods. The social and solidarity economy in the 21st century bears a striking resemblance: here we find actors encountering real difficulties in building a combined political identity for the SSE even though the common goods they value are similar.

In studies of the contemporary SSE in France a paradox has gradually come into view. This research has made it increasingly clear that four common goods (with four corresponding senses of justice) systematically structure SSE actors' practices, as well as how they represent these practices and the meaning they give to them. But although reference to these common goods can be found in the speech of *all* the actors, the investigation shows that their practices regularly compromise these goods, provoking irritation among other actors. These disputes were hardly mentioned by existing monographs and articles about the SSE. And the issue of this justification-practice contradiction remains wide open to this day.

In our most recent work (published as well as submitted or undergoing revision) we have outlined the first elements of an attempt to resolve this paradox, which the present IGSR project would seek to confirm or refute. The notion of topical states of mind (borrowed from phenomenology) employed by this work is intended to decrypt this paradox, which pragmatic sociology cannot resolve alone: by moving constantly from one (topical) state of mind to another, the SSE actors justify their actions using a common *grammar* that – regardless of the sector in which the activity is taking place – systematically combines the four historic common goods that embody a sense of justice: **self-management** (perceived as a democratic model that prevents the private appropriation of the organisation or of profits), **care** (taking care of the vulnerable), **local eco-innovation** (which often means converting to short supply

chains) and **political anticapitalism** (which represents SSE activity as a vehicle for an economy that refuses to replace public action but which dreams of substituting itself for capitalism (**fig. 1**)).

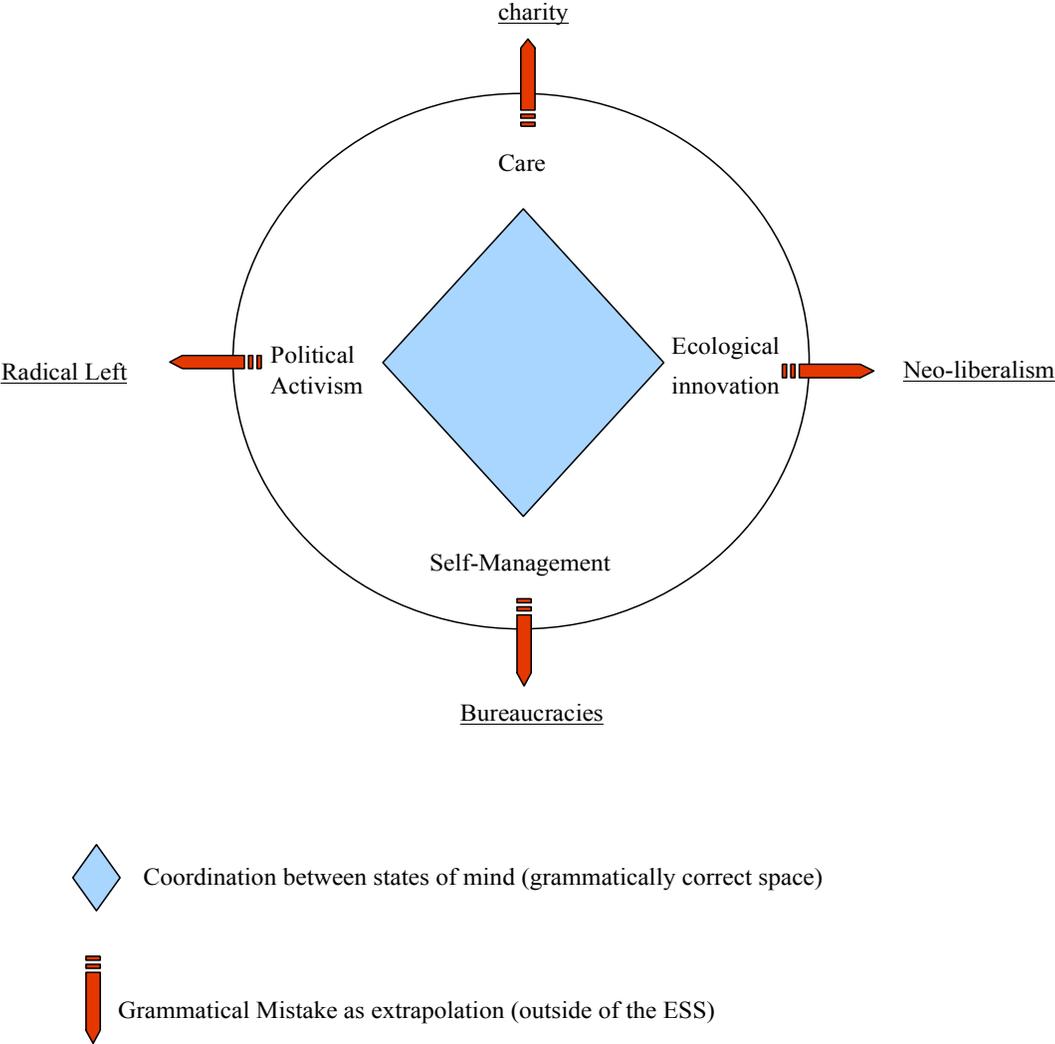
Without tying itself again to the genetic point of view – which attributes actors' misconceptions about their own action to the *illusio* – the hypothesis the IGSR proposes is that the actors, concentrating on the common good on which their state of mind is focused, agree in all good conscience to bracket out the other common goods. They all valorise the SSE's four common goods: self-management, local environmental innovation, care, anticapitalism. And they are able to move between the four corresponding states of mind. But most of them *shut their eyes* to certain common goods when various challenges constrain them to focus on only one of them **in practice**. We might say that they make a *grammatical mistake* or that they *extrapolate* one of the common goods. In Weberian language, they abandon pursuit of the kind of ideal-type SSE organisation whose traces can be found in the literature of the 19th century.

The conclusion of previous research on the SSE in France was that these extrapolations generated disputes between different sectors of the SSE (Community Supported Agriculture, Solidarity Microfinance, Local Exchange Trading Systems and Community Services) which explain why the SSE is politically and economically so weak. The IGSR will evaluate whether things have changed in France and whether, because of the crisis and austerity, the sector in Greece has become stronger and more unified. If it has not, is this because of the same disputes and extrapolation? If it has, can we therefore conclude that the SSE in Greece is more politically mature? Or is it more unified out of necessity – because the state has withdrawn from several areas of social policy?

Constantly torn between these four common goods, the SSE thus has a moral-sociological coherence at the expense of a political or

economic coherence: the privileged – or extrapolated – common good can be **identical** in organisations belonging to **heterogeneous** sectors of activity (for example a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) and a Cooperative Collective Interest Society that produces wool), or very **different** in organisations belonging to the **same sector** (for example between Community services).

Figure 1. The grammar of the Social and Solidar Economy with its four states of mind (topics) and their extrapolations



Vacancy 1: PhD on the critical dimension of the social and solidarity economy

Position: One doctoral position: full-time, fixed-term position available for 2 years (+1)

Tasks expected from the PhD candidate

- Develop a qualitative database of SSE organisations in Greece, focused on the 20 most illustrative cases.
- Complete a PhD dissertation on a question directly related to this topic
- Participate in the political & social sciences Ph.D. programme at ULg and in the intellectual life of FaSS and Cléo (including teaching).
- Submit for publication a minimum of two articles or book chapters
- Present research results in international conferences
- Participate in administrative tasks related to the project (reporting, conference organization...)

All work is expected to be done in close consultation with the Principal Investigator and other members of the Criésol team. If the team reaches the second stage of an ERC application then the third year of this IGSR project will be financed by the FNRS. If not, then funding for a third year will have to be found by the Principal Investigator and his team.

Profile required

- MA in the Social Sciences (in sociology or anthropology)
- Ability to conduct qualitative interviews
- A background in political philosophy and the social and solidarity economy would be welcome
- Language skills: Fluent Greek and English speaker/reader/writer
- French is an asset
- Ability and desire to work in a team
- The doctoral candidate should have received a 120-credit master's degree no earlier than three years before they begin the project on **1st July 2018** (or four years before if the applicant has given birth to or adopted a child in the interim).

What we offer

- Attractive scholarship
- Resources to conduct fieldwork and participate in conferences and summer schools

- Opportunities to train and develop new skills
- A stimulating and international research environment located a train ride away from Brussels, Paris, London, Cologne and Maastricht
- Possibility of designing a joint PhD programme with another European university

How to apply

The selection process has 2 steps.

1. First, applications must be submitted electronically in English to Bruno Frère (bfrere@uliege.be) by **10 April 2018** with the message subject 'Criésol'. The following documents must be attached to the e-mail in two separate PDF files:

a) In the first file, named '**Motivation_applicant's last name**':

- A motivation letter (maximum 800 words);
- A CV (2 pages maximum) with detailed information on degree results and language skills;
- The names and contact details of two referees who would agree to write a reference letter

b) In the second file, named '**Sample_applicant's last name**': one writing sample (e.g. an essay or MA thesis chapter) in English or French demonstrating the applicant's relevant analytical abilities and methodological rigor (single-spaced, maximum 10,000 words).

2. Second, shortlisted candidates will be interviewed in person at ULg or remotely via Skype **at the start of May 2018**. The interview will be based on their academic track-record and a short research proposal related to the project (details of which will be sent by the principal investigator) that the candidate will be asked to submit by **1 May 2018** (single-spaced, maximum 3,000 words). The proposal should outline a PhD project connected to the sub-project on the the social and solidarity economy. It should include information on methodological strategies, possible theoretical developments (phenomenology, social theory, etc), and relevant literature and data sources.

Applicants will be notified of the final outcome of the selection process before **15 May 2018**. The successful candidate would be expected to start no later than **1 July 2018**.

For more information, please contact the Principal Investigator Bruno Frère (bfrere@ulg.ac.be)

Vacancy 2: Postdoctoral scholarship on the critical dimension of the social and solidarity economy

Position: One postdoctoral position: full-time, fixed-term position available for 2 years (+1)

Subproject summary:

This first step of the Criésol project consists in identifying Greek SSE organisations similar to those already selected in France. With the doctoral candidate's help, the postdoctoral researcher will be in charge of setting up an extended list of SSE structures in Greece and then a shortlist (of 20 organisations) which will be included in the study. The postdoc researcher will work to refine and adapt the theoretical framework (of French pragmatist sociology and phenomenology) for the Greek context with the principal investigator. He/she will also help coordinate the Greek and French surveys being developed by the other PhD researchers on the Criésol project. And he/she will help the principal investigator to write a proposal for an ERC project to set up a Europe-wide version of Criésol. Finally, he/she will be expected to write, revise and publish sociological texts from scratch and to participate in theoretical debates and exchanges within Cléo and the wider faculty.

Tasks expected from the Post-doctoral candidate

- Design and supervise the data collection process in Greece.
- To go to Greece to help the doctoral researcher with fieldwork
- To coordinate fieldwork in Greece and France, as well as theoretical reflection on the SSE in both countries.

- To help the principal investigator write a proposal for an ERC project to set up a Europe-wide version of Criésol.
- Participate in the academic life of the university as well as teach on the Master's programme in sociology and contribute to the organisation of the Faculty seminar and the Cléo seminar.
- Submit for publication a minimum of three articles or book chapters
- Present research results at international conferences.
- Participate in administrative tasks related to the project.

All work is expected to be done in close consultation with the Principal Investigator and other members of the Criésol team. If the team reaches the second stage of an ERC application then the third year of this IGSR project will be financed by the FNRS. If not, then funding for a third year will have to be found by the Principal Investigator and his team.

Profile required

- PhD in the social sciences (experience of research into the social and solidarity economy)
- Good knowledge of the social and solidarity economy in Greece
- A background in political philosophy, critical theory and phenomenology would be welcome
- The applicant must have obtained a **doctoral degree after 1 July**

2012 (parents can add one additional year per child) and **before 1st July 2018**.

- Demonstrated experience with qualitative methods and interviews.
- 2 articles in international peer-reviewed journals or 1 sole-authored book published.
- Language skills: Greek and English (+ French as a serious advantage).
- Ability and desire to work in a team.
- The applicant must not have resided/been employed/been a student in Belgium for more than 24 months during the 3 years before the start of the postdoctoral contract.

What we offer

- Attractive scholarship.
- Resources to publish and participate in conferences.
- Opportunities to train and develop new skills.
- Possibility of teaching in English (or French) within the Master's programmes in sociology and the sociology of work.

- A stimulating and international research environment located a train ride away from Brussels, Paris, London, Cologne and Maastricht.

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a) In the first file, named 'Motivation_applicant's last name':

- A motivation letter (maximum 800 words).
- A CV with detailed information on degree results, publications, research experience and language skills.
- A copy of the PhD dissertation if available.
- The names and contact details of three referees

b) In the second file, named 'Sample_applicant's last name':

One writing sample (e.g. an article, book chapter or chapter of PhD thesis) in English or French that fits well with the Criésol project, showing the candidate's methodological rigor, relevant analytical abilities and, preferably, the applicant's familiarity with sociology, critical theory, phenomenology or the SSE (single-spaced, maximum

10,000 words)

2. Second, shortlisted candidates will be interviewed in person at ULg or remotely via Skype **at the start of May 2018**. The interview will be based on their academic track-record and a short research proposal related to the project (details of which will be sent by the principal investigator) that the candidate will be asked to submit by **1 May 2018** (single-spaced, maximum 3,000 words). The proposal should consist of an article proposal connected to the sub-project on the social and solidarity economy. This should include information on methodological strategies, possible theoretical developments (phenomenology, social theory, etc), and relevant literature and data sources.

Applicants will be notified of the final outcome of the selection process before **15 May 2018**. The successful candidate would be expected to start no later than **1 July 2018**.

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