Masterarbeit:

Feminist Political Geographies

Since the early 2000s, geographers have advanced feminist political geography as a lens that decentres conventional state security, the central character in conventional geopolitics. Instead, feminist political geographers emphasise: (1) analysing geopolitics from scales other than that of the nation-state and globe; and (2) examining the embodied aspects of geopolitics, including how geopolitics is constituted by various peripheral subjects (see e.g. Hyndman 2004; Koopman 2011).

This MA theme is concerned with advancing **feminist political geography** through students' original research. Students are welcome to utilise discursive analysis and/or face-to-face methods, such as interviews and participant observation. This topic may also be combined with internships with international organisations in Switzerland, or NGOs at their research sites. If the student is interested, the supervisor may help to facilitate links with NGOs in Thailand or Myanmar. Students may choose from one of the following themes, or come up with their own:

(1) Critical approaches to the "women, peace, and security" agenda

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (WPS). The resolution emphasises the role of women in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. However, even though the international community considers UNSC Resolution 1325 a landmark event, scholars have highlighted, for instance, that women's peacebuilding efforts continue to be systematically overlooked in official peace processes. In addition, the one wonders if the WPS agenda's emphasis on women's protection and inclusion fully recognises the nuanced gender politics that accompany conflict and peace.

Students may consider the following questions: What is the WPS agenda, and to what extent does this agenda reflect the concerns of feminist political geographers? How might the conceptual tools utilised by feminist political geographers be used to analyse the WPS agenda? What actors have utilised and/or co-opted the WPS agenda at various scales, ranging from the local to the global?

(2) Gender roles in conflict

Men are often portrayed as combatants in conflict, whereas women and children are consigned to being represented as passive victims. These representations circulate and are contested in a variety of realms, from newspapers, to popular culture, to official statements by elite geopolitical actors. In reality, however, gender roles in conflict are far more complex. In Karen State, for instance, women served as village chiefs while men fought on frontlines. In the process, they skilfully negotiated with soldiers from various warring factions. In Rojava, images of women fighters in the international media do not entirely reflect the manner in which feminist principles are incorporated into the PKK's philosophy of democratic confederalism.

Students may consider the following questions: How are gender roles constructed in representations of conflict—either in general, or with reference to specific site(s)? Which actors produce, circulate, and contest these representations, and why? What role do gender roles play in conflict transformation and/or peacebuilding; conversely, how does conflict or peacebuilding produce femininities and masculinities? How do discourses about gender compare with the actual politics of gender amidst conflict, violence, and warfare?

(3) Intimacy, community, and conflict

Feminist geographers emphasise that women do not act in isolation, but in relation with other subjects. Furthermore, scholars studying war emphasise that conflict does not suspend social relations, but rather transforms it within specific contexts. Conflict shapes marriages, friendships, and communal relations in ways that are often not adequately discussed. Yet, these relations are crucial to how people live with conflict and build peace. One example is 'women-to-women diplomacy' in Myanmar, or efforts through which women from various ethnicities come together to prefigure the peaceful, multi-ethnic society they hope to see (Cárdenas & Olivius 2021). Another thread of research reflects how widows rely on other social networks to cope with the aftermath of war (Ramnarain 2015).

Students may consider the following questions: What kinds of social relations do subjects form through conflict and peacebuilding? To what extent are conflict dynamics replicated or transgressed in these relations? What methodological challenges arise from studying the intimate and/or communal dimensions of conflict?

Language: English

Please get in touch with **Shona Loong** (shona.loong@geo.uzh.ch) if you are interested to write a Masters thesis on this topic.

Works cited

- Cárdenas, M. L., & Olivius, E. (2021). Building peace in the shadow of war: women-to-women diplomacy as alternative peacebuilding practice in Myanmar. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding,* 15(3), 347-366.
- Hyndman, J. (2004). Mind the gap: Bridging feminist and political geography through geopolitics. Political Geography, 23(3), 307-322.
- Koopman, S. (2011). Alter-geopolitics: Other securities are happening. Geoforum, 42(3), 274-284.
- Ramnarain, S. (2015). Universalized categories, dissonant realities: gendering postconflict reconstruction in Nepal. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(9), 1305-1322.