

## **1 PhD Position, Research Group “Anticipations and Disruptions of the ‘Synthetic Age’: Rubber, Science and Resources” (Univ. Bern)**

**Supervisors: Dr. Moritz von Brescius (Project leader, Univ. Bern) and Prof. Christof Dejung (Univ. Bern)**

The research group “Anticipations and Disruptions of the ‘Synthetic Age’: Rubber, Science and Resources” is inviting applications for one doctoral position (100%, yearly salary CHF 47'040). Starting date: 1 April 2021 (negotiable); duration of contract: four years. The research project is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation as part of an Ambizione Fellowship.

The overall project examines the interconnected histories of natural and synthetic rubber in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rubber, the key material of modern communication, mobility and warfare, not only provides an exemplary case through which to explore the shifting boundaries between the natural and the artificial. It also represents an ideal commodity through which to investigate the forgotten challenges, utopian and dystopian visions that surrounded chemistry's discovery of the ‘fourth kingdom’ – next to nature's flora, fauna and minerals – more generally. The Ambizione project explores how the search for novel materials and a wide range of substitutes produced a rich history of anticipation and ‘what-ifs’. The project engages with current interests in human–nature relationships across the humanities. By focusing on rubber, a key substance of industrial modernity, a number of geographically diffuse and socially transformative processes at the dawning of the ‘synthetic age’ become available for systematic study for the first time. For more information about the research project, please follow the link: [https://www.hist.unibe.ch/ueber\\_uns/personen/von\\_brescius\\_moritz/index\\_ger.html](https://www.hist.unibe.ch/ueber_uns/personen/von_brescius_moritz/index_ger.html)

### **Field of research for the PhD project**

The PhD project should lie in the field of modern resource regimes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It can address one or several of the following topics: rubber and war industries; the history of rubber waste and recycling; ersatz products, synthetic rubber and questions of autarky in modern society; history of consumption and everyday technologies, including the role of gender relations for the consumption of rubber products; rubber, imperialism and commodity frontiers; rubber factories and businesses; the history of resource planning and development; or other subjects related to rubber, research into synthetics, industrial chemistry and resources. Applicants are free to choose an appropriate geographical focus and approach for their project.

### **Selection criteria for the doctoral researcher**

- MA, MPhil or equivalent in History or a related discipline in the humanities or social sciences, held by time of appointment, with an MA thesis of high quality.
- The submitted research sketch/proposal (title, research question, scholarly background, aims, method, sources) should be situated in the field of the PhD project outlined above.
- An interest in transnational/global approaches and research designs is welcome.
- Familiarity with theories and concepts such as global commodity chains, resource frontiers, waste and recycling regimes and/or approaches to the history of consumption will be an advantage. Knowledge of economic, environmental or business history is beneficial, but not mandatory.

- A readiness and ability to conduct archival research (financed by the Ambizione grant) in more than one language and country, preferably in France, Germany, Britain, the United States or Italy, is required. Research experience and interest in non-European archival materials and languages are welcome.
- Language proficiency in English is required and advanced knowledge of German, French, Italian, Dutch or other languages relevant to the doctoral project is key.
- Applicants should demonstrate a high level of motivation for the project and an ability to conduct archival work and to pursue challenging research in an independent manner, while also being committed to teamwork and constructive exchange within the research group. Previous international academic experience (study, research, publications, conferences, etc.) would be an asset.

Please address any queries you may have to [moritz.vonbrescius@hist.unibe.ch](mailto:moritz.vonbrescius@hist.unibe.ch) at any time.

Applications (in English or German) should include:

- (1) Covering letter (max. 600 words)
- (2) CV (detailing language skills and research experience so far)
- (3) Research proposal demonstrating how your previous research expertise and/or personal interests and your own ideas for the doctoral project are related to the overall project “Anticipations and Disruptions of the ‘Synthetic Age’” (max. 1,500 words, including references)
- (4) Master Thesis as a writing sample (plus the readers’ reports/ *Gutachten*; in case of an unfinished MA degree, the BA Thesis)
- (5) Official diplomas/certificates (in English/German, otherwise a translation is required)
- (6) If applicable: certificates of employment/job references (in English/German, otherwise a translation is required)
- (7) Names and contact information of two academic referees.

Please submit all documents in a single PDF (max. 10 MB) to [moritz.vonbrescius@hist.unibe.ch](mailto:moritz.vonbrescius@hist.unibe.ch) by 31 January 2021, 23:59 CET.