

Additional information for job announcement

Doctoral Researcher (f/m/d)

FOR 5183 „Cross-border Mobility and Institutional Dynamics“

Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Cologne

Reference number: Wiss2108-14

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Full information: <http://ethnologie.uni-koeln.de/content.php?kid=0125>

FOR 5183: Transborder Mobility and Institutional Dynamics (English summary)

Scientific coordinators:

Prof. Dr. Karin Schittenhelm, University of Siegen

Prof. Dr. Katharina Inhetveen, University of Siegen

This Research Unit brings together scholars from sociology, anthropology and political science in order to examine the nexus between transborder mobility and institutions from a transregional and transnational perspective that extends beyond European host countries. It aims to explore the ways in which institutions frame, shape or control mobility (especially labour, educational and forced migration) and seeks to ponder the influence of these forms of mobility on institutional endurance or change. Building on seven, closely intertwined subprojects, the particular focus of the Research Unit's theoretical and empirical analyses are the institutional dynamics – i.e. processes of institutionalisation, de- and re-institutionalisation as well as institutional pluralisation – that accompany transborder mobility and the mechanisms of internal and external institutional regulations of mobility.

As numerous public socio-political debates indicate, transborder mobility poses significant challenges to existing institutions. At the same time, institutional practices and (un)certainities are potentially as mobile as the actors involved in transborder mobility. This means that institutions can materialise, re-materialise, change or dissolve beyond their societal context of origin and thus trigger, shape or impede various forms of mobility. The Research Unit thus builds on the assumption that the interplay of institutions and various phenomena of transborder mobility is conflict-laden and also challenges existing social scientific frameworks of analysis. With a particular focus on institutional dynamics and the institutional strategies of social actors enmeshed in transborder mobility, the Research Unit seeks to explain the ways in which institutions simultaneously have the potential to mobilise or immobilise social actors and how transborder mobility likely transforms or even transnationalises institutions.

The particular relevance of this Research Unit is founded, firstly, in its systematic empirical and theoretical focus on the intersections of transborder mobility and institutions from a transdisciplinary, transnational and transregional perspective. Secondly, it addresses an existing research gap since, to date, social scientists have often explored mobility and migration separately from institutions and institutional dynamics. Ultimately, the Research Unit aims to gain empirically nuanced and theoretically grounded insights into the nexus between transborder mobility and institutional dynamics and contribute to a better understanding of these publicly relevant socio-political phenomena by developing an analytical toolkit for this purpose.

Project: Migration, Intersectionality and Institutional Interaction: African migrants' experiences in the United Arab Emirates (English summary)

Principal Investigator: Prof. Dr. Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne

The Arab Gulf States are among the most important target destinations for global labor migration. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), for example, international workers represent over 85 % of the population. While a large part comes from South and Southeast Asia, the number of migrants from various parts of Africa has been steadily increasing since the 1980s. A key institution for regulating labor migration is the patronage-based *kafala* or sponsorship system, which determines the entry, employment, and residence of migrants in the Gulf States. While in principle all migrants are confronted with the same system of migration control and with a labor market geared to international workers, previous studies show that the latter's experiences and strategies vary significantly.

This is the entry point of the planned project which examines the interplay between international mobility and institutional dynamics by applying a decidedly intersectional and actor-centred approach. Specifically, the project aims to understand how the interaction of migrant actors and representatives of institutions in the UAE is shaped by different vectors of inequality and how the actors' social positionings are mutually construed, and flexibly and strategically negotiated. Going beyond existing research, the project focuses on institutions of migrant self-organization and considers the *kafala* system not only in terms of its restrictive dimensions but also in terms of how migrants productively incorporate it into their strategies.

In order to investigate these questions, the project focuses on migrants from Africa (specifically from Ethiopia and Cameroon), a group that has received little attention in previous research on the Arab Gulf. Methodologically, the project integrates anthropological and sociological approaches and uses a mixed-methods design, which includes, among other things, auto-ethnography as a central method for researching intersectionality. By pursuing a decidedly intersectional analysis of migrant experiences with the *kafala* system, the project promises to contribute to an intricate understanding of the interplay of international mobility and institutional dynamics.

Keywords: Intersectionality; mobility; migration; institutions; UAE; Ethiopia; Cameroon