

Authoritarian Urbanism Global Perspectives from the South

A call for applications for short-term postdoctoral fellowships by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute Freiburg, Germany

Application deadline is 21 February 2020

Eligibility: Postdoctoral researchers from [ODA-recipient countries](#) based at research institutions in countries of the 'Global South'.

The Global Scholarly Dialogue Programme is an initiative of the [Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung](#) (RLS) aimed at supporting critical research in and from countries of the Global South, and at strengthening dialogue between critical research on authoritarian capitalism from the Global North and South. To achieve this, together with the [Arnold Bergstraesser Institute](#) (ABI), the RLS is inviting applications from postdoctoral researchers for **two visiting fellowships of up to 6 months**, with a **starting date in September 2020**.

As visiting scholars in Freiburg, Germany, fellows will be able to establish a dialogue with local researchers and explore possibilities of collaborative research and projects. Fellows will be able to use all ABI facilities, such as the library, as well as enjoy the academic environment of Freiburg University. We also strongly encourage applicants to engage in teaching and outreach activities at the ABI (details can be discussed at a later stage). The fellows will be part of the RLS's [International Research Group on Authoritarianism & Counter-Strategies](#). As such, they will have the chance to collaborate with the RLS and participate in the activities of the group.

The fellowships explicitly aim to contribute to a global dialogue between scholars who seek to better understand the rising and seemingly global spread of authoritarianism and advance a path towards a just, democratic society. We value research output that combines rigorous academic work with scholar-activist methodologies (i.e. participant observation, collaborative research).

We are especially interested in approaches that propose a global perspective for and from the Global South on this issue. To what degree can (historical and contemporary) experiences of authoritarian practices in the Global South contribute to a global understanding of the phenomenon today?

Recent electoral developments have paved the way for reactionary populism to come to power in countries as diverse as the Philippines or Brazil, seemingly capitalizing on discontent with democratic institutions and on crime-related fears. Albeit to different degrees, democratically elected officials have implemented authoritarian strategies in terms of the relationship between the state and society, for example by ruling through presidential decrees or by limiting freedom of assembly through anti-protest laws. This trend no longer seems to represent a mere failure of democratization, but rather an active process of the transformation of practices of rule.

The results of this process are starkly visible in cities. Punitive policing, coercion against protests that highlight the lack of housing or inequality in urban mobility, or the declaration of particular urban spaces as ‘dangerous’, making them subject to specific coercive strategies, are all examples of the “new authoritarianism”. While austerity policies are nothing new in the Global South, new urban austerity programmes are resulting in a new wave of “austerity urbanism”, often intertwined with coercive measures in the guise of making cities more secure (Jenss, 2019). Simultaneously, however, authoritarianism is increasingly a global and multiscalar phenomenon (Bogaert 2018).

Conventionally, analyses of the tension arising from such forms of authoritarian democracy tend to be framed by the political boundaries of the nation-state. This programme invites scholars to think about the need to study the ‘new authoritarianism’ as a phenomenon that transcends the local (Murakami Wood 2017, Glasius 2018). It has been argued that authoritarian rule can also be performed “at a distance”, via military and other kinds of international partnerships, and via the provision of ‘aid’ (Hagmann and Reyntjes 2016). International efforts to ‘promote’ democracy may end up reinforcing authoritarian elements if the meaning of democracy posited is subjugated to a particular, narrow political understanding based on ‘economic freedom’ (Schuetze 2019).

Recognizing the mounting protest movements based in cities around the world, we encourage scholars to think about how social groups formulate their (everyday) responses to the shifting dynamics of democratic mechanisms and coercion in times of austerity. The temporary and mobile character of urban protest also has a potential to rework the city, and the scalar reach of these movements should not be underestimated.

Research questions may revolve around topics such as:

- urban authoritarian politics;
- housing policies and mobilizations around housing and coercion;
- the state and dynamics of democratization and authoritarianism;
- relations of local coercion and global flows of goods;
- practices and processes of authoritarian capitalism; and
- austerity urbanism in the Global South.

Possible questions might be:

- Which actors and practices are contributing to an expansion and universalization of authoritarian practices, particularly as embedded in urban politics?
- To what extent are actors driving authoritarian practices connected beyond the local level, or independent from each other? To what extent are we witnessing the emergence of a global authoritarian populist axis?
- How do authoritarian decision processes on various scales relate to one another, and to what degree are they connected globally?
- To what extent does the global turn to authoritarian capitalism represent a renegotiation of social relations at the local, national, and global level, and what is the function of colonial relations in this context?
- In which ways are reconfigurations at the urban level instrumental for a more global turn towards or against what has been called authoritarian neoliberalism?

This list is not exhaustive. We encourage you to look at the profiles of researchers based at the ABI as well. We encourage applications from the fields of critical security studies, urban studies, critical political economy and postcolonial approaches, political anthropology and sociology, and international relations that work within the scope of this call-out.

We explicitly welcome projects that place the research at the ABI/RLS in broader, ongoing research activities on the aforementioned topics. Please state why you consider a research stay at the ABI to be enriching for your work.

Requirements

Due to funding stipulations, only citizens of [ODA-recipient countries](#) are eligible to apply.

Applicants should have completed their PhD within the last five years.

Please note that in order to facilitate an ongoing and productive dialogue between scholars, the working language at the ABI and in the International Research Group on Authoritarianism & Counter-Strategies is **English**. Therefore, applicants are required to have a very good command of the English language.

Financial Support

The financial support provided to the researchers is calculated at €2,300 per month for the time spent at the host institution. Return (economy class) air fares for the intercontinental flights will be covered by the fellowship, as well as travel costs to attend events at the RLS headquarters in Berlin. If you plan to travel with your family, additional funding may be granted. While assistance will be provided in facilitating the stay, fellows will have to be self-organized (i.e. housing, childcare).

Submission

Please direct any queries and submit your application **in one single PDF file** (5 MB max; please name the file "SurnameName_application.pdf") to gsdp.application@rosalux.org.

Your application should include:

- A **letter of motivation**
- An **outline of the project** you would like to carry out and present while in Freiburg, consisting of:
 - abstract (max. 250 words);
 - research proposal (max. 2,500 words);
 - project timeline (please include your proposed start date); and
 - proposed publication outcomes.
- **Curriculum vitae, including a publication list**
The publication list should be divided into publications in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and conference papers, and provide information on the type of

publication (original work, review, etc.). If available, please provide a digital link to the publication.

- **Brief description of political, social and/or cultural engagement**
As a political foundation in the tradition of the workers' and women's movements, as well as anti-fascism and anti-racism, the RLS places strong emphasis on the candidates' political, social, and cultural engagement. We ask you to provide some information on this.
- **Referee's report on the candidate and research project**
The report can be written either by an academic expert, or by a person involved in leftist political projects, movements, or initiatives. In both cases, the report should provide information on the project and candidate, and explain the importance of the proposed work.
- **Copy of your passport**
- **English language skills**
You should have at least a [CEFR C1 level](#) of English. If you do not have a certificate to prove this, please provide written information regarding your language skills.
- **Certificate of your highest academic degree (generally a PhD).**
Unless the document is issued in English, please provide an English translation (a certified translation is not required).

All applicants will be informed by mid-April 2020 of the results of the selection process.

- Bogaert, Koenraad (2018): *Globalized Globalized Authoritarianism: Megaprojects, Slums, and Class Relations in Urban Morocco*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bruff, Ian and Cemal Burak Tansel (2019): 'Authoritarian Neoliberalism: Trajectories of Knowledge Production and Praxis', *Globalizations* 16(3): 233-244.
- Glasius, Marlies (2018b): 'Extraterritorial Authoritarian Practices: A Framework', *Globalizations* 15(2): 179-97.
- Hagmann, Tobias and Reyntjens, Filip (eds) (2016): *Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Harrison, Graham (2019): 'Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Capitalist Transformation in Africa: All Pain, No Gain', *Globalizations* 16(3): 274-88.
- Jenss, Alke (2019): 'Authoritarian Neoliberal Rescaling in Latin America: Urban in/Security and Austerity in Oaxaca', *Globalizations* 16(3): 304-319.
- Murakami Wood, David (2017): 'The Global Turn to Authoritarianism and After', *Surveillance & Society* 15(3/4): 357-70.
- Schuetze, Benjamin (2019): *Promoting Democracy, Enforcing Authoritarianism: US and European Policy in Jordan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.