

ERC Grant: “The Political Lives of Migrants: Perspectives from Africa”

The **European Research Council (ERC)** will fund a new research project on migration in Africa, led by Dr Franzisca Zanker. The Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute will receive **1.5 Mio Euro for the project in the next five years.**

The project is among the 14.2% of the applications that was selected for the *ERC-Starting Grant 2024*. Besides its pertinent research question and the important inclusion of perspectives from the Global South, the evaluation panel found the innovative research methods especially convincing. These include participatory theatre workshops and the analysis of migrant agency diaries.

The reception of refugees and other migrants, their long-term perspectives and their lives in a new home are among the most pressing political questions of our time. What do migrants think about this? How do they see their lives, their role and their political agency? A four-person research group based at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, headed by [Dr Franzisca Zanker](#), will work on these questions.

The research context

The project seeks a new perspective beyond the dominant Eurocentric migration research by focusing on the political agency of refugees and other migrants in Africa. The research will consider various postcolonial spaces and conditions. The project aims to further a self-defined understanding of **migrants' political agency** in interaction with state and non-state institutions and actors. In the spirit of critical knowledge production, the ERC-funded project follows a collaborative research approach, for example by collaborating with Africa-based colleagues and translating the research results into local languages.

The research project will shed light on the effects of different migrant trajectories, i.e. their legal status or whether in their country of origin, transit or destination, on their political agency. Empirical research will be conducted in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia and Malawi.

Dr Franzisca Zanker about her success:

‘I am delighted about the opportunity to bring new perspectives to such an important social issue with this project. What can migrants tell us about their own role, needs and desires in society? What can we learn by adopting an Afrocentric perspective? This prestigious and substantial grant will allow my team and I to push methodological boundaries, further our understanding of migrant agency and ultimately knowledge production.’

About Dr Franzisca Zanker

Dr Franzisca Zanker is a researcher on conflict and (forced) migration. After completing her doctorate at the University of Tübingen in 2015 and a position at the GIGA Research Institute in Hamburg, she has headed the Cluster on Patterns of (Forced) Migration at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute in Freiburg since

2017. She was Principal Investigator on several research projects on the political interests of African states in migration and refugee protection, funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research and the Mercator Foundation. She is co-coordinator of the research group 'African Mobility, Migration and Displacement'.

Dr Zanker has an extensive publication record and serves on the editorial board of Journal of Refugee Studies. She has carried out fieldwork in Kenya, Liberia, The Gambia, Uganda and South Africa.

The Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute

The [Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institute \(ABI\)](#) is one of the most important research institutes in Germany in the fields of comparative areas studies and transregional studies. As an independent, non-profit research organisation, the institute cooperates with the University of Freiburg. The ABI conducts research on issues of migration, conflict and governance in countries of the Global South.

About the European Research Council (ERC)

The ERC was founded by the European Union in 2007 and is the most important European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. It funds creative researchers of all nationalities and ages who carry out projects throughout Europe. More information at www.erc.europa.eu

Dr Zanker and Ms Taxis are happy to answer any press enquiries.

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