



### Position Announcement

European Research Commission Advanced Grant Research Group

*Bloodborne: Hot Zones, Disease Ecologies, and the*

*Changing Landscape of Environment and Health in West Africa*

### 3 Doctoral Candidate Positions (3 years)

The ERC Advanced Grant Research Group *Bloodborne: Hot Zones, Disease Ecologies, and the Changing Landscape of Environment and Health in West Africa* invites applications for **three funded positions** for **doctoral candidates** (salary group TV-L 13, 65%, 3 years, additional funds for archival/field research will be provided). **Deadline is May 4, 2022.**

We are looking for doctoral candidates to become part of a five-year research initiative that aims to discern the ecological, economic, political, and social forces at play that have simultaneously turned certain regions into profitable sites of natural resource extraction, productive enclaves of biomedical research, and hot zones of pandemic threats, with a focus on the Guinean rainforest of West Africa. Drawing upon historical, anthropological, and epidemiological methods, the research group seeks to understand how the lives and relations of human and nonhuman beings have become reconfigured through processes that have come to identify particular regions as hotspots of biodiversity and viral infectious diseases across the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

The doctoral candidate will pursue research to advance one of three work packages related to the project:

- 1) Investigate transformations in land, labor, and multispecies relationships facilitated by large-scale concessions for mining or plantation agriculture that have altered lives and livelihoods and created conditions of possibility where existing or newly emerging infectious diseases might thrive. We are particularly interested in someone with training in political ecology, historical epidemiology, and/or environmental history willing to conduct both archival and ethnographic research in the mining regions or plantation belts of Liberia and Sierra Leone where outbreaks of and research on Lassa fever have occurred.
- 2) Utilize ethnographic and historical methods to identify key players, institutions, ideas, and animal reservoirs that have been critical in the historical genealogy of a One Health paradigm that attempts to bridge veterinary science, conservation biology, and medicine. How One Health approaches have come to shape public health agendas, interactions among NGOs and government agencies, and the lives of local inhabitants within West African nations, like Liberia, that have become major recipients of One Health funding, is also a research question that we aim to address.
- 3) Undertake historical research on the role of primates as a keystone species in understanding the ecology of viral diseases and how conservation policies, public health and trade in primates, blood, and viruses reshaped the lives of human and non-human inhabitants of the Guinean rainforest. We also seek to understand the historical shifts and different valuations that have accompanied the reconfiguration of primates as a keystone species of biomedical research, biodiversity conservation, and animal rights.

The Bloodborne Research Group is based at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC), a joint initiative of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich and the Deutsches Museum. The project is being led by LMU guest research professor Gregg Mitman, who also holds an appointment at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, along with a postdoctoral fellow. The RCC is the largest



Center for Advanced Study in the environmental humanities worldwide and hosts numerous international scholars working on environmental topics. The doctoral candidate will be based in Munich and affiliated with the Doctoral Program in Environment and Society at the RCC, a research-oriented program that includes seminars, workshops, and colloquia with international visiting fellows designed to facilitate interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the complex relationships between environment and society. The doctoral candidate will engage with and profit from the RCC's lively research community, its regular Colloquia series and workshops, as well as interactions with scholars working across the environmental humanities. A master's degree in a relevant area in the humanities, social sciences, or public health is required.

**Please submit your application by 4 May 2022 as a single PDF to [G.Mitman@lmu.de](mailto:G.Mitman@lmu.de).**

The following documents are required:

- An academic curriculum vitae (including publications and awards, if applicable);
- A letter of motivation in which you summarise a) your experience and interests; b) why you are applying for this position; and c) why you are the best candidate (2 pages max in English);
- A proposal detailing the proposed PhD project that would contribute to the overall aims of ERC grant as well as a sketch of how you would address the topic theoretically and methodologically (2 pages max in English);
- Your Master's thesis (if in a language other than English, or if you are presently completing your thesis, please provide a table of contents and a summary of max. 5 pages in English)
- The names and contact information of two academic referees (NB: these will only be contacted if you are shortlisted).

We welcome candidates with experience outside of academia (e.g. working at NGOs, think tanks or in industry) and encourage applicants from West Africa. We especially seek applications from qualified individuals with disabilities and welcome applications from women.

**Interviews for the position will be held in early June 2022. The position will begin in September 2022 at the earliest.**

For applicants unfamiliar with the German academic system, a TV-L 13 65% position provides a liveable salary, full tuition, and benefits including full healthcare, pension contributions, 30 days paid vacation, and parental leave (if required). As the candidate will be a state employee, they are required to have German health insurance and to make contributions to the German tax and social welfare system. Please note that knowledge of German language is not required for this position. Working hours are flexible, and the RCC offers a family-friendly working environment. The RCC can also assist, if necessary, with work permits and visas.

For further information and questions regarding the position, please contact the PI Dr. Gregg Mitman ([G.Mitman@lmu.de](mailto:G.Mitman@lmu.de)).