



The Production and Reproduction of  
SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

# Opening Conference

of the Research Unit

## The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities

<https://socialinequalities.uni-koeln.de>

Registration:  
contact-socialinequalities@uni-koeln.de

November 11-12, 2021

Official Conference Program



This Research Unit is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

THURSDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

1:30-2:00PM CET

### Opening Remarks

*Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne,  
Speaker of Research Unit*

2:00-3:00PM CET

### Panel 1: Keynote

#### The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Labor Migrants: Accentuation of Inequalities.

*Cynthia Pizarro, University of Buenos Aires*

Covid-19 has been at the forefront of our lives, impacting work conditions, employment prospects, and social relations. The poor became further marginalized, and inequalities were accentuated during the pandemic. Laborers' massive loss of livelihoods made their lives more precarious.

This disease disproportionately affects labor migrants due to the activities they are engaged in, their work and housing conditions, and the lack of protection they suffer in terms of healthcare and social aid. Their deep vulnerability deepens the risk of becoming infected. Although their role as 'essential workers' is sometimes spotlighted, they are frequently discriminated against on the basis of the various stigmatizations that have (re)emerged in the context of the pandemic.

Based on my long-term research focus on labor migration in Latin America, I will address the principal risks they face during the migration

cycle: origin, transit, destiny, and return. I will refer to labor migrants' particular vulnerability and how they face restrictions on international mobility.

3:00-3:05PM CET

### Break

3:05-4:00PM CET

### Panel 2

#### What makes a Politician an Expert on Colonial Labor? The ILO and the Concept of 'Native Labor'.

- *Chair: Ulrike Lindner, University of Cologne*
- *Presentation: Fabiana Kutsche, University of Cologne*
- *Comments by Daniel Maul, University of Oslo and Marcel van der Linden, University of Amsterdam*
- *Q&A plus general discussion*

After publishing the Slavery Convention in 1926, the Governing Body of the International Labor Organization (ILO) pushed for the instalment of a 'Committee of Experts on Native Labor' to discuss international measures for colonial labor politics. In this panel, Fabiana Kutsche will discuss her first findings on the selection of the committee's members, their qualifications, and the colonial networks they were part of. Using the examples of selected expert biographies, this presentation sheds light on the personal intersections between (inter-)national politics, shared racialized ideologies, and knowledge transfer between the leading colonial powers in the 1920s and 1930s.

FRIDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

1:00-2:00PM CET

### Panel 3

#### Debates on 'Trafficking in Persons and Slavery' in Cameroon.

- *Chair: Tu Huynh, Jinan University*
- *Presentations: Anne Kubai, Södertörn University and Jonathan Ngeh, University of Cologne*
- *Q&A plus general discussion*

'Trafficking in persons' is a legal concept framed by national and international policymakers and has been applied in different parts of the world, including Africa. It refers to the recruitment and transfer of persons by means of coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation. The two presentations in this panel will center on the following questions: How is the concept of 'trafficking in persons and slavery' understood and used by different actors on the ground? How does the current policy framework contribute to questioning or reinforcing existing structures of exploitation?

2:00-2:05PM CET

### Break

2:05-3:00PM CET

### Panel 4: Roundtable

#### Communication during and after Covid-19.

- *Moderation: Jonathan Ngeh, University of Cologne and Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne*

This roundtable attempts to address the issue of power asymmetry in research by incorporating members of the groups under study as equal partners in the process of knowledge production. The participants of this roundtable are members of the research project "Communication during and after Covid-19" based in the United Arab Emirates and Germany. They will discuss about their experiences of living through the pandemic and how it has affected migrants, and their experience of working in the project. They will shed light on new opportunities as well as on some of the challenges as experienced by different migrants.

3:00-3:05PM CET

### Break

3:05-4:00PM CET

### Panel 5

#### Discussing the Contentions Surrounding Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Ethiopia.

- *Chair: Nicholas B. Miller, Flagler College/ University of Cologne*
- *Presentation: Lovise Aalen, Chr. Michelsen Institute*
- *Discussant: Meron Zeleke Eresso, Addis Ababa University*
- *Q&A plus general discussion*

This session will discuss recent policy measures in Ethiopia aimed at favoring local and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The construction of mega manufacturing industrial parks in different parts of the country is a case in point. It is assumed that the development of the industrial parks would significantly contribute to the nation's industrial development by attracting FDI, increasing government revenue and export, creating employment, and diversifying industrial production. However, the much-touted employment opportunities created by these manufacturing industries do not seem to be matched by decent working conditions, thus contributing to growing economic inequalities. The contribution will highlight the role of Chinese investors engaged in different manufacturing industries in Ethiopia.

4:00-4:15PM CET

### Closing Remarks

*Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne,  
Speaker of Research Unit*