

## Social Inequalities in the Gulf and Beyond

Workshop

February 6-7, 2023

New York University Abu Dhabi

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### Workshop Description

Research on social inequalities has been on the rise in the past decade, demonstrating the persistence and widening of inequality at the global scale. It has also been increasingly interdisciplinary – spanning a variety of fields, from sociology to health and environmental studies – as well as intersectional. While classical approaches have focused on income or education, current research explores how factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, or geographical location contribute to shaping the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic has operated both as a revelator and an intensifier of social inequalities, and has heightened hierarchies of exposure to the virus as well as of access to care.

This workshop is organized around the visit to Abu Dhabi by members of the research unit “The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities” at the University of Cologne, which addresses the overarching question of why attempts aimed at increasing equality often have contributed to generating more durable inequalities. The purpose of this workshop is to initiate a dialogue between the members of this research unit and NYUAD faculty members and students working on inequality.

Conversations will take place over two days, with the first day focused on the conceptual frameworks and methodologies of researching inequality; and a second day dedicated to looking at inequality through a specific focus, first on a phenomenon (the global COVID-19 pandemic); and second, on a regional area: the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula.

### The workshop is co-organized by:

Laure Assaf, Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi

Michaela Pelican, Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Cologne

Research unit “The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities”,

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

## Workshop Program

Monday, February 6, 2023 | Room A6-009

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9:30 AM	Arrival of participants, coffee
10-10:30 AM	<b>Welcoming Remarks</b> Laure Assaf, NYUAD
10:30 AM – 12 PM	<b>Panel 1: Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies of Research on Inequalities</b> <i>Roundtable: 10 mins each, general discussion</i> Sabino Kornrich, NYUAD, “Being creative about measuring tough concepts: discrimination, gender norms, and inequality” Habib Khondker, Zayed University Abu Dhabi, “The migrant workers and the informal others: Some blind spots of inequality research in sociology” Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne, “Studying social inequalities through the lens of epistemic inequalities”
12—1 PM	<i>Lunch break</i>
1 – 2:30 PM	<b>Panel 2: The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities</b> <i>Project presentations: 15 mins each, general discussion</i> Fabiana Kutsche, University of Cologne, “Between global standards and unequal treatment: The ILO and the concept of ‘native labour’, 1919-1950s; an interim report” Tu Huynh, University of Cologne, “Understanding inequality in China: Concepts of socioeconomic inequality across three historical moments” Laure Assaf, NYUAD, “Defining the middle-class in Gulf societies: An anthropological perspective”
2:30 – 3 PM	<i>Coffee break</i>

3 – 4:30 PM

**Panel 3: Labor, Development, and Social Inequalities**

*Project presentations: 15 mins each, general discussion*

Jonathan Ngeh and Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne, “Discourses of “human trafficking” in Cameroon – dis/connections between local and external perspectives”

Meron Zeleke, Addis Ababa University, “‘Development’ fostering social inequality? The case of labor arrangements in Ethiopia’s manufacturing sector”

Melina Platas, NYUAD, “Norms and the persistence of the Muslim-Christian schooling gap in sub-Saharan Africa”

7 PM

*Dinner at Al Mrzab restaurant*

**Tuesday, February 7, 2023 | Room A5-1139**

10 AM – 1 PM

**Internal Workshop of the Research Unit “The Production and Reproduction of Social Inequalities”**

1 PM – 2 PM

*Lunch break*

2 PM – 3 PM

**Panel 4: Social Inequalities and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Project presentations: 15 mins each, general discussion*

Saba Karim Khan (with Malte Reichelt and Katharina Klaunig), NYUAD, “My life is not to be called a failure’: family expectations, status, and return migration decisions among South Asian migrants in the Gulf”

Tu Huynh, Jonathan Ngeh, Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne, “African migrants, social inequalities and new opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic”

3 – 3:30 PM

*Coffee break*

3:30 – 5 PM

**Panel 5: Social Inequalities and Migration in the Gulf**

*Project presentations: 15 mins each, general discussion*

John O’Brien, NYUAD, “Entitled, Executive, Ethical, and Egalitarian: Service Consumption Styles and Elite Identity Presentation among Western Expatriates in the UAE”

Saleh Seid Adem, University of Cologne, “‘Ijaza’ houses, more than just a roof over their heads—the complex housing arrangement of Ethiopian domestic workers ‘outside’ the kafala in the UAE”

Froilan Malit, University of Glasgow, and Kristian Alexander, TRENDS, “Ongoing Research Agenda: Low-Income Migrants and Social Inequality in the UAE”

5 – 5:15 PM *Coffee break*

5:15 – 6:15 PM **Panel 6: Community-Based Approaches to Research in the Gulf**

*Roundtable: 10 mins each, general discussion*

Anke Reichenbach, Zayed University Dubai, “‘Enriching’ Dubai’s Creek area. On the redesign of a sensory landscape”

Laila Soliman, NYUAD, “Behind the scenes of *Temporary People*”

Cadence Cheah, NYUAD, “The role of public spaces in shaping lived experiences of the Sub-Saharan African migrant community in Abu Dhabi”

6:15 – 6:45 PM **Closing Remarks**

Michaela Pelican, University of Cologne

Laure Assaf, NYUAD

7 PM *Bus departure for dinner on Saadiyat island (Beirut-sur-Mer)*