

Call for Applications for two PhD scholarships (Geography)

Start date: 1 October 2021, duration 24 months¹

Deadline for application: 31 May

Protein Matters: Securitizing Zoonoses in the EU and the US

Funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Special Programme “Security, Society and the State”

Zoonoses – diseases that originate from animals and spread to human populations, such as rabies, SARS, or borreliosis – are usually considered health threats. However, they have also become a complex governmental and security issue. Travel restrictions, increased state surveillance and intensified policing activities are proof of this move to “securitize” zoonotic threats within today’s globalized world. Moreover, zoonoses are a matter of security in other complex ways: Throughout human history, societies needed to organise sufficient and healthy food for their members, and governments have thus been responsible for guaranteeing food security, e.g. by introducing quality standards, regulating prices or punishing criminal actions. With increasing population density, food security does not only mean to provide *enough food for everyone*. The problem lies within the close proximity of humans and livestock in parts of the meat production chains, which increases the risk of spreading diseases across the globe as a consequence of today’s ubiquitous mobility of goods and people.

The provision of protein takes an important role in these governmental responses, with growing mass production of meat as one important driver of nutritional health, yet also of novel viruses, ever changing bacteria and of climate change. Although there is an increasing awareness of alternative and economically feasible supply chains based on non-animal dietary protein, regulatory frameworks for alternative proteins as a strategy to reduce risks of food-production-borne pathogens have not been implemented anywhere in the world. Yet, these alternative approaches are needed to decrease the possibility of future epidemics, while still being able to satisfy the needs of a growing global, urban population.

The project investigates how agroindustry, consumption habits, public discourses, and their regulation by law influence pandemics. Based on an analysis of past outbreaks of zoonotic epidemics and their impacts on supply chains in the EU and the USA, “Protein Matters” asks, what communication strategies, channels and media are used to raise public awareness for the link between agroindustry and zoonoses. Moreover, we are interested in the governmental strategies that are deployed in the EU and the USA to legitimize and create public support for containment policies and regulations.

PROTEIN MATTERS is looking for two doctoral candidates who will conduct research within the theoretical framing and interests of this project. The candidates will conduct research under the supervision of the PIs of PROTEIN MATTERS. Applications will be examined against the following criteria:

¹ possibility to extend the scholarship for 12 months upon additional application by the candidate during the second year of funding and approval by the Foundation.

- Master's degree in Geography, or in another social science discipline with an affinity to geographical theories, methods and concerns;
- Candidates preferably have shown interest in health, food geographies, and (critical) security studies;
- Prior research experience with qualitative methods, including interviews, archival search, and discourse analyses; Interest to work and publish within a collaborative research project;
- Willingness to conduct fieldwork, including research stays in the USA (Washington D.C.) and the EU (Brussels).
- Very good command of English;
- Prior working experience (e.g. internship) within a research institution, regulatory body, or private enterprise which is relevant to the topics of Protein Matters would be an advantage

The successful candidates will receive a monthly stipend of 1,600€ (exempt of taxes in Germany) plus a travel allowance of 400€ travel allowance for maximum 12 months. For attendance at academic conferences, an additional budget of 1,300€ per scholarship can be provided. **Start date is 1 October 2021.** The scholarship can be extended by additional 12 months, depending on the PhD candidate's successful reapplication to the Gerda Henkel Foundation during the second year of funding.

In order to apply, please submit the following documents until May 31:

- Letter of motivation (max. 1000 words) outlining how your past work relates to the project
- Research statement (max. 2000 words) outlining how your planned PhD project relates to the issues of the project
- CV

Please send your application in one single pdf file to: f.i.mueller@uva.nl