

## **Mobility fellowships Global Indo-Pacific: Connecting Histories and Futures**

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### **1. The research themes**

The Indo-Pacific embracing large parts of Asia and Oceania and spanning from the East coast of Africa to the West coast of the American continent has been referred to both as a maritime ecological system and a strategic geopolitical construct. The region comprises a multiplicity of colonial and postcolonial histories and geographies, which together increasingly challenge Western-centric mappings of international order. These historical experiences, along with the growing geopolitical significance of the region, have led to a substantial body of scholarship. The research node will be fostering a better understanding of the Indo-Pacific's complex historical trajectories and regional dynamics and their implications for pressing global ecological, demographic and geopolitical issues.

The research node comprises three modules:

#### **Module 1: History, Heritage and Civilization** (ARI, GHI London, GHI Paris, IAAW)

Leaders: Christina von Hodenberg & Tim Winter

In today's multipolar world, history, religion and culture are shaping international affairs in complex and consequential ways. The Indo-Pacific is the epicenter for such developments, a region where ideas about history and heritage are being transformed by geopolitics, frontier digital technologies and the climate crisis. Dramatic changes are occurring in the ways cultural heritage is being preserved and constructed by archaeologists and museum practitioners and presented to public audiences through new technologies. As China, India and others mobilize their civilizational legacies to exert their will on the future, this module addresses the past as a vector of South-South and North-South regional competition and collaboration spanning both terrestrial and oceanic regions. By working outwards from the vantage point of Southeast Asia, and using ARI's research infrastructure of Arabia-Asia and India-China Studies together with the GHI London's Colonial and Global History and India Research Programmes, we will research the intellectual and institutional drivers that have shaped the key influential discourses of history and heritage – empire, civilization, Buddhism, Islam, Indian Ocean World, Silk Road etc. – that have analytically connected East Africa to Pacific Asia.

## **Module 2: Knowledge, Networks, and Institutions (ARI, DIJ, IAAW, MWF Delhi)**

Leaders: James D Sidaway & Franz Waldenberger

Colonial legacies, postcolonial modernization narratives, and Cold War politics continue to profoundly influence current socio-economic development paradigms and imaginaries of the future within the Indo-Pacific region. Drawing on global historical and transregional approaches and acknowledging the situated and contested nature of knowledge, we critically examine how the production and circulation of knowledge has informed the formulation of national development programmes and geopolitical strategies and has been linked to the formation of networks and institutions from the colonial period to the present day. We thus aim to contribute to a deeper historical understanding of the dynamic complexities involved in processes of regional cooperation and integration and the epistemic foundations of the “global south-global north” framework. The Indo-Pacific region provides a highly instructive and relevant case in this respect. Hosting both “global south” and “global north” nations, it has in recent years witnessed increased competition between different infrastructural developmental models and heightened geopolitical confrontation, with China’s Belt and Road Initiative –and reactions to it especially prominent. Japan and China, in particular, have pursued contrasting strategies for technological cooperation, health diplomacy and most recently the transnational governance of data and information. We conceptualize infrastructural projects as both material and epistemic manifestations of networks. Health and digital infrastructures, for instance, are not only technical systems but also vehicles for soft power, regulatory diffusion, and international norm- setting. Particular attention is paid to Japan’s strategic role through initiatives such as the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, Data Free Flow with Trust, and the promotion of Universal Health Coverage. These approaches build on a long history of Japanese technical assistance for countries in the Indo-Pacific. They mediate US market-oriented and EU rights-based models and resonate well with nations in the Global South seeking autonomy amidst a growing global Sino-American rivalry.

## **Module 3: Earth, Energy and Water (GHI Washington and ARI)**

Leaders: Sarah Beringer & Stefan Hübner

Projects within this module investigate historical experiences and current challenges related to climate change and environmental degradation in the Indo-Pacific, research the interactions between historical and contemporary climate, energy, and environmental policies pursued by actors of various backgrounds within or towards the region, and explore the social and cultural phenomena of migration and mobility in relation to the first two dimensions. Taken together, they bridge critical knowledge gaps in environmental history, history of migration, and oceanic history across local, regional, and global scales.

The global Indo-Pacific is shaped by the confrontation between the US and China, which strongly interferes with present-day climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, but also by the global history of environmental technologies since the 1970s. In the US in particular, policymaking for a Green New Economy has depended on China’s growing dominance as

producer and exporter of green tech products, but has increasingly been influenced by the rivalry with China. Yet these green tech products' histories also emphasize global collaborations and technology transfers, from the Sunshine Project, a massive Japanese research initiative of the 1970s-1980s, to various countries' (solar powered) satellite projects during the Space Age, to Germany's rooftop solar research boom and bust in the early twenty-first century, and Singapore's role in floating solar photovoltaics development. Altogether, the region and its environmental conditions are central for understanding the global histories of technological and non-technological climate adaptation strategies both terrestrial as well as maritime. On land, internal migration in response to escalating climate change impacts such as rising sea levels have been an important adaptation strategy. Of particular interest is "managed retreat" understood as the strategic relocation of communities and infrastructure away from vulnerable coastal areas. On sea, important and instructive past and present adaptation and mitigation strategies include floating solutions, like floating buildings, fish farms, and floating solar PV systems in response to historical monsoon flooding and current global sea level rise concerns

## 2. Fellowship guidelines

### Rights and duties

Fellows are expected to contribute to one of the module blogs, which will be set up on the MWS blog platform (<https://mws.hypotheses.org>) or write a research note based on the research conducted during their stay. Legal claims to grants do not exist. Grants can only be awarded within the given budget.

### Declaration of Acceptance

Elected fellows need to submit an informal declaration of acceptance, including an acceptance of these guidelines. The grant notification takes effect upon receipt of the signed declaration of acceptance.

### Funding conditions

We expect that applicants are fully employed and have a stable salary. Therefore, only travel costs and a daily stipend for the time away will be covered.

For **MWS-employees**, funding will be provided according to Dienstreise regulations.

For **external researchers** (e.g. ARI, HU, etc.), the regulations of the Feldman travel grants will be applied. Grants are paid as allowances for studies abroad<sup>1</sup>. Daily rates vary depending on the host country. The present rates (July 2025):

Destination	Daily rate
Great Britain, London	€ 47
India, New Delhi	€ 61

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the foreign allowances of the German Research Foundation, [www.dfg.de/foerderung/programme/einzelfoerderung/forschungsstipendien/stipendienrechner/index.jsp](http://www.dfg.de/foerderung/programme/einzelfoerderung/forschungsstipendien/stipendienrechner/index.jsp) (called forward on May 30, 2023). Daily rates for Germany are aligned with base rates of the Fulbright Commission, [www.fulbright.de/programs-for-u-s-americans/students/study-and-research-at-a-german-university](http://www.fulbright.de/programs-for-u-s-americans/students/study-and-research-at-a-german-university) (called forward on May 30, 2023).

France, Paris	€ 40
Singapore	€ 61
Japan, Tokyo	€ 68
USA, Washington	€ 56
Germany	€ 32

In addition, expenses for travel to the host country and back (least expensive option) will be refunded as incurred and documented in accordance with the German Travel Expenses Act. Travel expenses incurred for further travel in the host country are not eligible for reimbursement. When planning the travel, the continuously updated information from the authorities and the relevant travel information from the German Federal Foreign Office must be observed, all travel related risks are borne by the fellows themselves. Any changes of travel plans must be communicated promptly.

### **Payment of travel grants**

Reimbursements for incurred costs need to be claimed in written forms and to include the original receipts. Claims should be made without undue delay.

### **Funding period**

Travel grants are awarded for the approved duration of the research stay. If, contrary to expectation, the applicant is not in a position to claim the funding on the agreed date, a new date for the start of funding may be arranged with the host institute provided that the joint committee is notified.

### **Non-compliance with the guidelines / premature termination of the travel grant**

If a recipient fails to comply with the conditions or requirements detailed in these guidelines, or has given false information or concealed facts that preclude funding, the research node reserves the right to terminate the research grant prematurely and demand repayment of all funding hitherto transferred.

### **Reports on placements abroad**

Within three months from the end of the funding period the research node must be provided with a final report.

### **Additional provisions**

Recipients of the travel grants from the Global Indo-Pacific research node are obliged to adhere to the principles of good academic practice issued by the Foundation based on the principles defined by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

The Global Indo-Pacific research node reserves the right to change guidelines and instructions in the interest of the research node where such changes are not unreasonable for the recipient. Recipients shall be given timely notice if any such changes are made. Changes shall be deemed to have been accepted unless the recipient objects in writing within four weeks.