



**Universität
Zürich** UZH



FONDS NATIONAL SUISSE
SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS
FONDO NAZIONALE SVIZZERO
SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PhD position on the project 'ROADWORK: An Anthropology of Infrastructure at China's Inner Asian Borders'

Department:

Institut für Sozialanthropologie und Empirische Kulturwissenschaft / Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies

The project 'ROADWORK: An Anthropology of Infrastructure at China's Inner Asian Borders' funded by the SNSF professorship grant seeks a PhD candidate to conduct research on road construction and maintenance in the China-Kyrgyzstan border region.

About the project:

For the past fifteen years, China has invested heavily in long-distance transport infrastructure connecting its eastern provinces with its long-underfunded western and northern border regions. Parallel to this, the scope of China's infrastructural activities has expanded on an unprecedented scale into the territories of its western neighbours. Since 2013, these projects have been discursively subsumed under the label of the Silk Road Economic Belt. ROADWORK turns an ethnographic lens on the transport infrastructure that undergirds the vision of the Economic Belt, placing infrastructural decay and maintenance at the centre of inquiry. Though maintenance lacks the obvious spectacle of construction, analysis of it is crucial because of its omnipresence, its economic cost, and its social, material and political complexity. This is particularly the case given the transnational nature of the Economic Belt. Ethnographic focus on maintenance will be vital in bringing to light the everyday life of this mega-initiative, which promises to transform geopolitics in the 21st century. Focusing on the pivotal Sino-Inner Asian border region, with its fluid landscapes of deserts, mountains and steppes, the project will explore roads from the perspective of those who build, maintain and use them, and also from the perspective of those, whom the new roads exclude.

About the job:

The position will be funded for four years. The PhD will be part of an international team conducting research on recently built and upgraded roads at the westward arc of the Economic Belt in northwest China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. As part of the team, the PhD will conduct one year of ethnographic research in southern

Kyrgyzstan. While the candidate is expected to design her/his own research project during the first six months of the grant, the general focus of this sub-project will be on how the intertwining phases of road construction and disrepair have influenced trade and other economic relations in this border region with China over the past three decades.

The candidate will be expected to complete her/his PhD within the four years of the project. With the exception of the fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan, the PhD student will be expected to be present at the Department and actively participate in Department's academic activities as well as in collaborative activities in the team. These will include: team-teaching, organization of workshops, conference participation, publishing, and designing a museum exhibition, amongst other activities.

Employment:

60% as a PhD student according to SNSF rules:

http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/Annex_XII_Ausfuehrungsreglement_Beitragsreglement_E.pdf

Required qualifications:

- MA in Social Anthropology, Human Geography, or related field
- Interest in the anthropology of infrastructure and economic anthropology
- Evidence of familiarity with social-anthropological methodology
- First-hand knowledge of Kyrgyzstan
- Fluency in Kyrgyz and Russian

More information:

Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi, email: joniak@anthro.unibe.ch

Application:

Please send the application as a single pdf file to the PI of the project:

Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi, email: joniak@anthro.unibe.ch

Application deadline: 22 June 2018

Beginning of appointment: 1 November 2018