ifa Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy"

Call for Applications

The ifa Research Programme on "Culture and Foreign Policy" provides experts with an opportunity to conduct research on current topics related to international cultural relations and to work at the nexus of theory and practice. Research projects normally last up to six months. During this period, the experts involved in the project provide actors in the area of international cultural relations with clear, concise summaries of the latest academic findings. They formulate recommendations for future foreign policy strategies, initiate expert dialogue, and organise discussion forums and events.

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen / Institute for International Cultural Relations) invites proposals for the following research project:

Gender Perspectives on AI: A Strategic Scope for Action for Inclusive International Cultural Policy?

In the field of Artificial Intelligence, feminist AI emphasises the need for decolonisation, inclusivity and equity. Existing gender and racial biases in data sets used to train AI applications reinforce inequalities, unequal power structures, discrimination and violence in the digital sphere with unpredictable consequences. There already exist a number of networks of feminist data and AI experts worldwide, such as FemAI, A+ Alliance, Pollicy or UNESCO's Women4Ethical AI, which raise awareness and foster gender equality in the AI agenda. However, the share of women in AI research and development at universities and tech companies is still underrepresented.

At the same time women and marginalised groups are very much exposed to security risks in the cyberspace. In this sense feminist AI includes enhanced tech security for vulnerable groups, not only, but especially women regarding hacking, disinformation, hate speech, violence, reproducing and reinforcing gender and racial discrimination.[1] Thus, women and marginalised groups should be involved in shaping regulatory policies to include an intersectional gender perspective.

This seems to be a potential scope of action for International Cultural Policy and the values associated with Feminist Foreign Policy. Since Sweden published its Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in 2014, about sixteen other countries followed the example and either have already published such a strategy or announced to do so. The definitions of Feminist Foreign Policy vary in the different countries, but four principles are included in all FFPs: "Include gender equality as goal or strategy, contain a broadened definition of 'security,' elevate diverse voices, and address historic power imbalances."[2] Germany launched its strategy in March 2023. It focuses on rights, resources and representation (3Rs) of women, girls and marginalised groups which should be considered and fostered in every aspect of foreign policy making.

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[1] Ferl/Perras. (2024). *Beyond the Code. Unveiling Gender Dynamics in AI and Cybersecurity for International Security*, PRIF Spotlight 2/2024, Frankfurt am Main.

[2] Foster/Markham. (2024). *Feminist Foreign Policy in Theory and in Practice*. New York: Routledge, p. 27.

How could AI help to counter hate speech and (gender) violence in digital space? What impact does AI have on inequalities and power relations in international cultural relations? What opportunities does AI offer to counter colonial legacies in cyber politics and to question power structures in international relations? How could the Federal Foreign Office with its external cultural policy support inclusive approaches to AI? Is there a correlation between patriarchal power structures being reproduced in and with the cyberspace and societies becoming more and more oppressive? To what extent does AI-based disinformation play a role in that regard? Which structures need to be changed and how, so that the new authoritarian developments of governance which rely on technologies of surveillance, security and accumulation of data can be vehemently countered?

The research shall identify policy recommendations, specifically what needs to be changed for a more inclusive international cultural policy and ideas for projects and programmes in the field of international cultural relations.

The publication can be written in English or German.

Format: Study and workshop(s)
Starting period: September 2024
Location: flexible
Fee: 9.000,00 € (gross)
Application deadline: 27 August 2024

The following application requirements and procedures apply to all projects: (see page 3 of this document)

Application Requirements

- Postgraduate degree (minimum M.A.)
- Proven experience and sound knowledge of the topic of the particular project and of foreign cultural and educational policy
- For projects with an event format: proven experience in event organisation
- For projects involving publication: very good, proven knowledge of editorial work and of academic publications
- Good knowledge of English and the language required for the particular project

Application Procedure

Please include the following documents in your application for the Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy":

1. Letter of motivation (including your contact information: i.e. address, e-mail, phone/fax/mobile numbers)
2. Description of the project:
   - Title and topic
   - Short description of the topic's relevance and gaps in existing research
   - Brief outline of research project plan (max. 2 pages)
   - Provisional work plan showing that the project is feasible within the funding period
   - Indication of relevant sources and methods
3. Your curriculum vitae (CV).

Please send your complete application (all abovementioned documents in one attachment, max. file size: 3 MB) by Tuesday, 27 August 2024 via e-mail to: research@ifa.de

The selection process is foreseen to take place around the calendar week 36.

For further information on the ifa Research Programme, please visit:
https://www.ifa.de/en/research/research-programmes/