

Berlin Anthropology Series

Winter 2023/2024

Wednesdays, 4.15-5.45 pm, on-site and online

November 15

Liina Mustonen

University of Duisburg-Essen



In the Shadow of Colonialism: Studying up in the Middle East

This talk highlights challenges related to the study of mobile elites in a formerly colonial context, in the Middle East. In particular, it draws on the author's ethnographic fieldwork in two Middle Eastern capitals Cairo and Beirut with society's privileged members. It illustrates how, in former colonized contexts, the positionalities of the researcher and the research subject are shaped by various geographic, social, and temporal locations. By delving into the challenges of elite research in a context that is informed and shaped by colonial legacies, the lecture questions the analytical value of binaries such as 'Western' and 'non-Western', the 'Global South' and the 'Global North', and colonized and colonizer that often shape the premises of research agendas. It shows how these binaries are often too shallow to grasp the existing social hierarchies and power asymmetries. It proceeds by first tracing the (colonial) histories of contemporary taxonomies of difference. Second, it looks at the researcher's positionality through the lens of gender and class, and finally illustrates how the mobile elite navigates between different audiences.

Join us on-site in the FU Seminar Centre, Otto-von-Simson-Str. 26, 14195 Berlin, room L116. Or online in our Webex room.

<https://fu-berlin.webex.com/fu-berlin/j.php?MTID=m9a748c434941b0a12d094ffdd9fe3ec3>
meeting ID: 2730 256 0409; password: BASwinter2023-24

