OeAW - Discovering the future

As a central non-university institution for science and research, the **Austrian Academy of Sciences - OeAW** has the task of **"promoting science in every respect"**. Founded in 1847 as a learned society, it now has over 760 members and around 1,800 employees dedicated to innovative basic research, interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and the dissemination of new insights. The OeAW initiates and maintains partnerships worldwide and represents Austria in international scientific organizations; it cooperates with numerous institutions in the scientific field in order to actively **shape the research landscape**.

POSTDOC (F/M/X) in Digital Anthropology

Job ID: ISA076PD225

The Institute for Social Anthropology (ISA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW), Austria's leading non-university research and science institution, is offering a

POSTDOC POSITION (F/M/X)

in digital anthropology

 (full-time, 40 hours per week)

for a duration of 36 months, **starting 1 January 2026**.

Your Tasks

We invite applications for a postdoctoral research position focusing on the intersection of artificial intelligence and energy. The researcher will be part of the ERC-funded project 'Resource spirits: An interactionist approach to animism and extractivism in Southeast Asia', led by Prof. Dr. Judith Bovensiepen. More specifically, we are looking for a digital anthropologist to investigate the growing use of artificial intelligence in extractive resource sectors. Potential applicants are invited to design their own project that aligns with the broader focus of the ERC-project.

Candidates are invited to submit a research proposal, outlining (1) the main research question and its significance, (2) the context, (3) the methods, (4) originality and anticipated contribution to the literature, and (5) alignment with the ERC project. While there is flexibility to develop an independent research project and specific theoretical approaches, candidates should be aware that they will be working in a group project, led by a Principal Investigator (PI). This means they will also have to contribute collaboratively to the project's core research questions and objectives. Projects should explore the connection between AI and energy; they can include but are not limited to the following topics:

·   AI in extractive industries

·   Development of software and applications

·   AI and sustainability or renewable energy

·   Data infrastructures

·   Digital twins and remote resource management

·   Surveillance, security, and energy extraction

·   AI-driven resource mapping and Indigenous land rights

While the ideal regional focus for the research project is Southeast Asia (since this is the focus of the ERC project), we will also consider proposals that explore the relationship between artificial intelligence and energy in other parts of the world or transnationally. Originality, feasibility and fit with the ERC project will be the main criteria for selection. The candidate's

project must be specific, have a strong anthropological focus and employ ethnographic research methods. The other team members on the project will be investigating the interaction between animism and resource extraction in Southeast Asia.

Your Profile

Essential criteria:

- Hold a PhD in Social Anthropology or a closely related field, awarded by 1 January 2026; no earlier than 10 years prior (plus parental leave).

- Previous research experience in the field of digital and/or environmental anthropology.

- Experience in and willingness to conduct long-term ethnographic fieldwork and have relevant language skills.

- Ability to work independently, including conducting fieldwork, data analysis and writing, plus develop original lines of inquiry.

- Familiarity with the anthropological literature on energy and artificial intelligence.

- Be prepared to join an existing research project and actively contribute to its central aims and collaborative inquiries.

- Be prepared to reside in Austria for the duration of the position (excluding fieldwork) and actively participate in project and institute events.

Our Offer

- Membership in ISA's Environmental Anthropology working group.

- Generous funding for fieldwork, collaboration and attending conferences.

- An annual gross salary of € 69.028,40 according to the collective agreement of the ÖAW.

Informal enquiries about the position may be directed to Prof. Dr. Judith Bovensiepen (office.bovensiepen@oeaw.ac.at). Enquiries about the application process may be addressed to Sandra Forster (sandra.forster@oeaw.ac.at). Please upload your application including the following documents **in a single pdf file under "CV"** no later than **20 July 2025**.

(1)   **Cover letter** (1 page max): **should contain a description of how you meet the essential criteria and highlight any past research experience in digital anthropology**.

(2) **Project proposal** (3 pages max): (1) the main research question and its significance, (2) the context, (3) the methods, (4) originality and anticipated contribution to the literature, (5) alignment with the ERC project.

(3) **Academic CV** (including list of publications)

(4) **Two writing samples** (publications or PhD chapters)

Interviews are expected to take place on the 10-12th September 2025.

Successful candidates will have to be based in Austria for the duration of the postdoc (unless on fieldwork).

APPLY NOW

The Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) pursues a non-discriminatory employment policy and values equal opportunities, as well as diversity. Individuals from underrepresented groups are particularly encouraged to apply. We particularly encourage applications from women, disabled, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates and those from the Global South to apply.

Contact

Sandra Forster | sandra.forster@oeaw.ac.at
Institute for Social Anthropology | 1010 Vienna, Austria
Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften | Austrian
Academy of Sciences | https://www.oeaw.ac.at/

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