

## **Departmental Colloquium Series Winter Semester 2022/23**



**The Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology  
of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität  
is pleased to welcome**

**Dr. Jan Beek**  
(Johannes Gutenberg-  
Universität Mainz,  
Institut für Ethnologie  
und Afrikastudien)

**Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> 2022, 4-6 p.m.**

„Towards an Anthropology of Defrauding“

Since the 2000s, fraud has become an omnipresent topic in the media. Enormous corporations and emerging start-up companies – in car manufacturing, the energy sector, coworking spaces, health technology, cryptocurrency and more – have been involved in fraudulent activity on a massive scale. At the same time, there has been a fundamental shift in people’s reactions to and perceptions of fraud. The public, and even experts, are increasingly unsure about where conventional economic activity ends and deception begins.

My research is part of this increasingly uncertain perception of fraud. In my ethnographic research on multi-level marketing schemes in Kenya, I have struggled to make sense of the practices I encountered. Multi-level marketing managers told myriad stories, seamlessly moving from one story to the next, adapting to specific audiences, constantly oscillating between seemingly contradictory frames.

My presentation will explore both actors’ narratives and the narratives that anthropologists have put forward in reaction to them. Contemporary defrauding practices seem to be more successful in evading discredibility than historical ones. This evasion is enabled by a specific mode of storytelling – an accumulation of narratives. Ultimately, research on defrauding brings to the fore our own anthropological narratives and their truth claims, challenging us to disentangle and discredit some of the stories we are told.

The lecture will take place at the room F 042, Fürstenberghaus, Domplatz 20-22.

**Everybody is welcome!**