The new ZMO research programme “Thinking through Translocal Entanglements: Perspectives from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East” (2020-2024) engages with the themes of ‘Environment and Justice’, ‘Age and Generation’, ‘Representations of the Past as a Mobilising Force’ and ‘Contested Religion: Between Religiosity, Morality, and Intellectual Culture’. These themes are investigated in a perspective which foregrounds Asian and African concerns and privileges changing translocal entanglements as a major factor in local developments. The programme thus takes up burning questions of the present but aims to investigate them in sites not usually in the focus of current debates. Furthermore, it is interested in a perspective that considers historical approaches and transcultural comparisons indispensable assets for such debates. ZMO’s contribution to them will be mostly by way of academic output, but we are also engaging a wider public through a varied outreach programme. The new research programme also means that a number of colleagues left ZMO, often to new positions elsewhere, while new researchers have joined. We look forward to shape the new programme together.

How climate-friendly is academic research?
Katharina Lange

Modes and means of travel are currently being critically reviewed by many scholars at German research institutions, including funding bodies. By January 2020, almost three thousand scholars and scientists at German, Austrian, and Swiss institutions had declared their voluntary commitment to “refrain immediately from taking official short-haul flights up to 1,000 km (equivalent to about 12 hours train journey)” (https://unter1000.scientists4future.org/signatures/).

Scholars at ZMO, too, are debating how to conduct research and engage in knowledge exchange in a climate-friendly way. The focus is especially on air travel, which accounts for most of researchers’ greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, while the urge to reduce harmful practices such as frequent flying is shared by many, reducing air travel in a meaningful way also raises difficult questions for scholars. Our work is essentially dependent on long-distance travel, based, as it is, on fieldwork and archival research, as well as collaboration and exchange with colleagues in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Research-related travel may be supplemented and occasionally even replaced by more stationary practices: telephone or online interviews, as well as the increasing availability of news reports or digitised archival material on the internet, enabling new ways of conducting research. In many places where we do research, however, a reliable electricity supply, not to mention stable and swift internet connections, are not necessarily – and not always or for everyone – a given. Moreover (apart from the fact that increased internet use is, of course, not climate neutral either), internet communications may be subject to surveillance, which may threaten the safety of interlocutors.
Overcoming the Dominance of Eurocentrism

Interview with Kai Kresse

Prof Kai Kresse has been the Vice-Director for Research at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient since August 2018. The heads of the ZMO research units PD Dr. Katrin Bromber (Age and Generation) and Dr. Heike Liebau (Representations of the Past as a Mobilising Force) asked him about his research interests.

One solution could be to continue flying long-distance for fieldwork, but to cut down on short-haul flights, for instance, when attending conferences. Short flights can be replaced by train travel; conference travel can be reduced further by using remote attendance, lecturing and presenting via video conference. Conferences at ZMO have increasingly made use of these formats. However, this also raises new problems. Scholars may have obligations of care and other responsibilities that make quicker travel important. Moreover, conferences do not only serve to showcase a paper; they are occasions at which scholars meet and get to know each other in person, where new project ideas and information about upcoming positions are shared, where contacts are made and networks extended. This typically takes place during the more informal ‘in-between’ times, over coffee or lunch. Physically attending specific meetings can thus be essential, especially for scholars who are employed on fixed-term contracts.

As we deliberate these issues, a working group has formed to explore what can we do to improve our record. At the individual level, many of us have already voluntarily changed our travel patterns, refraining from flying for distances that can be reached by train in twelve hours. Possible changes at the institutional level have yet to be discussed more fully. These could include an investment in technologies that enhance the quality of remote paper presentations, as well as explicit encouragement of train travel, including night trains, and supporting rail bonus cards for scholars. As we continue the discussion, the urgency of the issue of climate change and how to quickly reduce greenhouse gas emissions makes finding good solutions a pressing concern.

Before going to Columbia University (as an associate professor, MESAAS Department, 2013-2018), you had already been at ZMO, from the beginning of 2006 to the end of 2012. Now you are here once again, as a vice-director, and have begun your work with the founding of a multi-institute working group ‘Thinkers and Theorizing from the Global South’, in which both ZMO fellows and professors and postdocs from the FU and HU take part. Why did you start with this initiative?

‘Thinkers and Theorizing from the (so-called) Global South’ is a topic that is very important to me. I think that there is a great need in international research to apply conceptual thinking, theorizing, theories, and key concepts from the Global South and to then also really embed them in the way that we as researchers think and present the world. That includes having a look at disciplines like philosophy and history and the question of how the people of the world, and especially those in our regions of research interest, grapple with a universal impetus. This is where the intellectual traditions and concepts from the regions we conduct research on at ZMO have quite a lot to offer, not only to us “Westerners” but to the global society of researchers as
a whole. This is a large area that still requires a great deal of work. Under the banner of “decolonization” we are currently witnessing, happily and for good reasons, strongly growing interest in this topic. At the same time, we must make sure that long-term, substantive work on this is set into motion and followed up on, one that doesn't mean a placating or superficial invoking of the South, which runs the risk of being just another sort of steering from the north. In this way, I support the critique of “post-colonial studies” aired by anthropologists like Karin Barber, from Birmingham, and Richard Werbner, from Manchester, who criticise the fact that the work being done under this banner all too often remains a nearly exclusively Anglophone preoccupation that fails to adequately incorporate key concepts and conceptual debates taking place in non-Western languages as well as the contexts of our research regions in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Why is ZMO a good place to apply this standard?

Thank you for the question. I believe that ZMO has always been a very special place within the German academic and research landscape, for multiple reasons: For one, the international makeup of its researchers and academics. We have, for more than 20 years, made a point of employing researchers from the regions that we conduct research on, who then contribute and pursue their own research questions and conceptual perspectives on a completely equal footing. In addition to linguistic and regional expertise, which by the way are important qualifications for all ZMO employees, life experiences are incorporated or connected to research as a factor and point of reference, often leading to a particular connectedness to the lived experience of people in our regions of study in a way that, I think, rarely emerges in academic research, particularly as marking research institutions. Second, the idea described above is also very clearly reflected in ZMO’s research programme, and individual projects. Our focus is on transregional connections and historical processes, the dynamic stories of these transregional connections. There is a great willingness to think comparatively and to exchange ideas beyond regional and disciplinary boundaries. Both points result in a lively everyday research environment in which intellectual exchange is not necessarily explicitly driven by theory.

And where does the theory-building work take place?

For example, in ZMO discussions on projects, in informal conversations among colleagues and also in the already mentioned working group ‘Thinkers and Theorizing from the Global South’, which I initiated based at ZMO, but in which professors, postdocs and doctoral students from the FU and HU also participate. In this group, we are trying to work together, among other things, to interrogate and overcome the dominance of Eurocentrism in our analytical academic language. We see this as an obligation that we can only fulfil in close exchange with colleagues from the Global South. A good example is our current colloquium. Both Berlin-based academics who, like Claudia Derichs (HU), work on transregional histories of mutual interrelations, as well as speakers from South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, are taking part. Two of them work at the interface between research and funding institutions, Seteney Shami, for the Social Science Research Council and the Arab Council of Social Sciences, and Saleem Badat, who was formerly Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University in South Africa and subsequently one of the key decision-makers for the funding of projects by the Mellon Foundation in New York. He spoke specifically on research funding in Africa. The newly founded and annual “Berlin Southern Theory Lecture” is part of this initiative and is held in cooperation with the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the FU, where I am also a professor. It began in 2019 with Felwine Sarr, who has received much media attention in connection with his book Afrotopia and the current debate on the return of museum objects acquired in a colonial context.

You have outlined a pretty large field. Where do you locate yourself within it?

In my first book Philosophising in Mombasa (2007), I tried to outline as a philosopher and anthropologist the programmatic of an “Anthropology of Philosophy”. At the time, my main concern was to shed light on the intellectual traditions present on the Swahili coast as they are or were practiced in contexts of contemporary everyday life. Another aim was to portray East African thinkers within different dimensions of their life-worlds. Building on this, over the last ten years I have turned my attention more to the internal debates among Muslims on the Kenyan coast than to individual thinkers. In my second book, Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience (2018), I dedicated the main ethnographic chapters to historically anchored debates, both in the late colonial period and especially in the postcolonial period. My aim was to make the active intellectual exchange within such internal debates among Muslims comprehensible to the reader and to convey a sense of the role played here in the Swahili context by, for example, recurring patterns and idioms of argumentation, and key concepts. By the way, I was particularly pleased that my book, which was published in December 2018 by Indiana University Press, has also been published in
German Intelligence Agencies and the Security Industry, 6–7 June 2019, Hotel de Rome, Berlin

Ali Dogan

As part of the ‘Learning Intelligence: The Exchange of Secret Service Knowledge between Germany and the Arab Middle East 1960–2010’ project group, I attended the congress ‘Gesellschaftlicher Dialog Öffentliche Sicherheit – 2. Berliner Kongress für wehrhafte Demokratie’ organised by the ‘Wegweiser-Unternehmensgruppe’ and held at the Hotel de Rome in Berlin. The ‘Wegweiser-Unternehmensgruppe’ is an organisation consisting of two companies: Media & Conference GmbH and Research & Strategy GmbH. They provide different services, but work in close cooperation to lay the foundations for a long-term collaboration between Berlin (ZMO, FU, etc.) and various East African universities at which I myself have already been in exchange with colleagues. With the topic ‘Pathways of Knowledge, Internal Debate and Critique in Africa’ (see conference report, p. 8–9), shared and/or overlapping research interests in “knowledge” and negotiations of “knowledge” were explored from different perspectives. The focus was on investigating and discussing traditions of critique in Africa as important components in the dynamics of knowledge production and negotiation. The East African partner institutions, represented mainly by the disciplines of philosophy, religious studies, and literature, were the University of Nairobi, the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Addis Ababa, the Muslim University of Morogoro, the newly-founded RAF University (Nairobi), and the Pwani University Kilifi - where our former ZMO colleague Dr. Hassan Mwakimako now teaches. My many years of cooperation with colleagues from these institutions was an important basis for ensuring that such a large project with nearly 50 participants could function well. Each group brought 4-5 participants on board. From Berlin, ten participants from the fields of anthropology and religious studies came from ZMO and the FU Berlin. The feedback we received orally and in writing was very positive. For the graduate students from East Africa as well as from Berlin, the workshop opened up a new kind of networking. An important finding of the workshop is that dialogue takes time. Jetting to conferences with short presentations and 5-minute discussions is just not enough, it is not appropriate. We spent five full days discussing these topics in thematic working groups and in a large plenary session. We spent time together to first find out what the most important shared points and areas of tension are that need to be addressed. We would like to build on this in the future and continue workshops of this kind on a regular basis over the years, provided we can obtain funding for them - in this case, my appointment money from the FU Berlin made this workshop possible.

That sounds like a real thrill. What was the topic of the workshop, and who participated?

The workshop itself represents an attempt to lay the foundations for a long-term collaboration between Berlin (ZMO, FU, etc.) and various East African universities at which I myself have already been in exchange with colleagues. With the topic ‘Pathways of Knowledge, Internal Debate and Critique in Africa’ (see conference report, p. 8–9), shared and/or overlapping research interests in “knowledge” and negotiations of “knowledge” were explored from different perspectives. The focus was on investigating and discussing traditions of critique in Africa as important components in the dynamics of knowledge production and negotiation. The East African partner institutions, represented mainly by the disciplines of philosophy, religious studies, and literature, were the University of Nairobi, the University of Dar es Salaam, the University of Addis Ababa, the Muslim University of Morogoro, the newly-founded RAF University (Nairobi), and the Pwani University Kilifi - where our former ZMO colleague Dr. Hassan Mwakimako now teaches. My many years of cooperation with colleagues from these institutions was an important basis for ensuring that such a large project with nearly 50 participants could function well. Each group brought 4-5 participants on board. From Berlin, ten participants from the fields of anthropology and religious studies came from ZMO and the FU Berlin. The feedback we received orally and in writing was very positive. For the graduate students from East Africa as well as from Berlin, the workshop opened up a new kind of networking. An important finding of the workshop is that dialogue takes time. Jetting to conferences with short presentations and 5-minute discussions is just not enough, it is not appropriate. We spent five full days discussing these topics in thematic working groups and in a large plenary session. We spent time together to first find out what the most important shared points and areas of tension are that need to be addressed. We would like to build on this in the future and continue workshops of this kind on a regular basis over the years, provided we can obtain funding for them - in this case, my appointment money from the FU Berlin made this workshop possible.

Thank you for the interview. We wish you the time, energy, and good ideas needed for your important projects!

See also: https://www.switchtv.kemobile/view/2244
Interview by Peter Adamson, ‘History of Philosophy without the gaps’ podcast: https://historyofphilosophy.net/anthropology-philosophy-kresse
ZMO and Lasdel (Laboratoire d’études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local), based in Niamey, Niger, co-organised a regional workshop on Islam in West Africa that was held on 18-23 November 2019. It was sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation under its initiative ‘Knowledge for Tomorrow – Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa’. The workshop offered an opportunity to scholars working on Islam in the region to present their research, set up a network, and discuss possibilities for future collaboration. The 32 participants, mostly junior scholars, also included a number of senior and mid-career scholars.

Islam-related socio-political developments in West Africa have not only made the headlines, they have also become the centre of attention in the study of contemporary Africa and Muslim societies. This is in part because they have unveiled unfamiliar appropriations of Islam, including violent ones. How are we to understand these processes? What are their historical and cultural trajectories? What modernity of Islam and Muslim societies do they call attention to? How can academic institutions contribute to the engagement with these processes, especially in a context in which Islam has become a major socio-political and cultural factor? How can research institutions help knowledge production on Islam and Muslim societies in West Africa?

Focusing on Muslim practices on the ground, the workshop brought together scholars, most of whom are doctoral students and young post-doctoral researchers, from across the region and Europe.
Climate Justice and Migration: Mobility, Development, and Displacement in the Global South, 26–27 November 2019, ZMO, Berlin

Ali Nobil Ahmad

This workshop brought together interdisciplinary contributions from across the social sciences on migration and displacement in relation to climate justice. Sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, the programme was spread over three days: two days of workshop presentations, a public panel at the Heinrich Böll offices (see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGShpyv0nds), and a meeting between workshop participants and parliamentarians. A podcast covering the event is currently in production, and plans for a publication are in development.

With a focus on the global South, workshop papers covered developments and case studies in Pacific Island states, north and sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Middle East, and Latin America. A broad array of issues was debated, from the complex causes of historic and contemporary environmental migration, to addressing the consequences of displacement in rural and urban settings.

Given these complex causes and consequences, workshop participants largely agreed on the multi-dimensional nature of the phenomenon under examination, which necessarily spans human rights, labour and livelihoods, health impacts, and cultural heritage. All participants can therefore be said to have agreed on the analytical and practical dangers of climate-reductionism and environmental determinism of the kind that neglects the social, economic, and political causes, contexts, and consequences of all mobility. Such determinism is particularly distorting and problematic when it masks an uncritical project to curb immigration to Europe, fosters alarmism about the security consequences of climate-induced migration without attention to the many social and economic causes and consequences of displacement, and without concern for migrants’ rights.

The matter of definition – the question, of who/what constitutes...
a ‘climate refugee’ – is contentious. Some experts, however, refer explicitly and consciously to climate refugees and advocate filling legal and policy gaps to address this reality. Avidan Kent, Professor of International Law at the University of East Anglia (UEA), whose research focuses on international governance of climate-induced migration, argued that extant instruments of international law governing migration (the UNFCCC and the Refugee Convention) do not address the plight of ‘climate refugees/migrants’. Mechanisms that do, he added, are soft/non-binding, or lacking in coverage and reach (such as human rights law).

Bremen University’s Silvanna Lakeman presented research on the views migration policymakers hold on the need for greater cooperation between major institutions that govern mobility: the IOM and UNHCR. Policymakers agree that better co-ordination is desirable and possible. Rather than create new organisations to address climate-related migration, then, new mechanisms for existing institutions to co-operate would appear to be a logical first step. Extending the mandates of existing institutions would surely be part of this process.

Other scholars have reservations as to whether ‘climate’ or indeed ‘the environment’ can or should be abstracted and isolated from other causes and consequences of migration. Many sociological and anthropological presentations showed that the interplay between mobility and sedentariness is varied, contextual, and relational. Policy formulated in ignorance of this relationship tends to be ineffective.

Ali Nobil Ahmad referred at the panel discussion to research he conducted in Pakistan after the 2010 climate-related Indus flooding, where he encountered empty ‘model villages’ in rural Southern Punjab. Designed and built by international donors without knowledge of local preferences, patterns of mobility, or livelihood strategies, these accommodation solutions for persons displaced by the disaster were rejected by some of the semi-pastoral populations for whom they were constructed.

Evidence from the Gambia River Valley presented by ZMO’s Paolo Gaibazzi illustrated that worsening climate does not always deplete villages. It can simultaneously maintain sedentariness in cases where remittances from migrants who do manage to leave offset declining harvests, allowing others to stay put.

All this would suggest understanding the relationship between mobility and immobility is an important aspect of policy responses to climate-induced migration.

Indeed, focusing on migration and displacement should not preclude considering the plight of those rendered involuntarily immobile by climate change. Several cases involving ‘trapped’ populations were heard.

The University of Leipzig’s Arne Harmes presented research on the impact of coastal erosion and devastating storms along the shorelines of deltaic Bengal in East India, where slow onset displacement is quietly affecting populations forced to move in stages – sometimes on their own land. There is barely any support for or even recognition of their plight.

Tristen Taylor, a fellow at Stellenbosch University, presented evidence of the impact of protracted drought in the Northern Cape. The devastation of agriculture has not triggered migration from rural areas to big cities like Johannesburg, Kimberley, and Cape Town, because social welfare meets basic needs, allowing villagers with a strong sense of community to stay put. Unfortunately, however, they are stuck in a situation of dependency, and are experiencing downward social mobility in homes that once prospered. Without prospect of employment, economic or social improvement, drug abuse, social and health problems have resulted.
A group of 45 Germany and Africa-based researchers – ten from Berlin, ZMO and the Freie Universität Anthropology Department, and the others from seven East African partner universities – from the fields of anthropology, philosophy, Islamic studies, religious studies, and literature, spent five days together in an extended workshop discussing a wide range of aspects of mutual concern relating to the wider theme of “knowledge” and its contestation and negotiation in society, forms and practices of “internal debate”, and (largely still under-researched) forms of “critique” in African settings, as a core aspect of political, intellectual, and aesthetic debates in life-worlds and academia. Fortunately, funding for Kai Kresse’s recent professorial appointment at Freie Universität Berlin, could be flexibly used for this purpose. Many were involved in preparing this collaborative workshop. On the East African side, we would like to acknowledge our co-organisers at the Philosophy Department of the University of Nairobi, Oriare Nyarwath, Reginald Oduor, and Francis Owakah, and the senior researchers now based at the partner institutions involved. They include professors such as Rayya Timammy (Nairobi), Hassan Mwakimako (Kilifi), Mohamed Bakari (RAF University), Bekele Gutema (Addis Ababa), Al-din Mutembe and Nandera Mhando (Dar es Salaam), who contributed to organising this workshop without much bureaucratic effort and by involving everyone directly. On the German side, Sandra Calkins, Tylor Zoanni, Nils Riecken and Kai Kresse collaborated in preparations.

In addition to members of ZMO and the Institute of Anthropology in Berlin and Bayreuth, graduate students, lecturers, and professors from the University of Nairobi, the University of Dar es Salaam, the Muslim University of Morogoro, Pwani University Kilifi, RAF International University, Technical University of Kenya, and Addis Ababa University took part. They presented their research projects and discussed core points and pre-circulated key readings during sessions in small working groups, as well a final conference day. The programme was complemented by book presentations by Mohamed Bakari on “The Sage of Moroni,” an intellectual biography of Said Omar Abdalla, a Muslim Sufi leader and multilingual cosmopolitan philosophical thinker, and by Kai Kresse on “Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience,” reflecting upon discourses of political marginalisation as well as on internal divisions among coastal Muslims in Kenya. An evening of literary readings created a poetic moment when Doreen Baingana captured the audience with an excerpt from a novel about the history of Alice Lakwena, the spirit medium and rebel leader who played a key role in the Ugandan civil war. Joseph Situma read from an earlier novel about the invocation of spiritual powers among ordinary Kenyans in their everyday lives.

The individual working group sessions brought together smaller groups for intensive discussions on specific topics that had been identified in a collective process before the workshop: ‘religion, education, morality & political dynamics’; ‘intellectual culture, society & public debate’; ‘de-colonisation, (post)colonial modernity & critique’; ‘knowledge, human environments & critique’; and ‘religion, experience & critical imagination.’ In the spirit of the workshop’s aim to identify common research interests, the groups reported back to the plenum summarising the key points they had discussed over the week. This led to stimulating exchanges on individual topics and questions, the problem of concepts and their translation (such as nature, humanity), present and past political relationships of inequality in a historical perspective, as well as research methodologies.

Participants enjoyed the vivid and engaged interactions, while also talking through their different frames of experience, ways of working academically, and especially the (limitations on) possibilities of and conditions for conducting academic work. Graduate students, especially, made enthusiastic comments about the possibility of such intense, direct, frank and rich exchange. The African
and German participants were coming at this from quite different histories of experience linked with institutional tracks of higher education and the respective perspectives and expectations related to them. All participants welcomed the opportunity of continuing the workshop as part of a long-term, research-oriented partnership geared toward shared topics of interest and designed to help participants from Germany and Africa learn from each other. The group envisioned cultivating this partnership through regular, possibly annual, meetings. Indeed, real and fundamentally meaningful dialogue and partnership needs to be based on longer term interactions, and is best built on intellectual exchanges with a shared history.

A TV interview on the conference and workshop week with Mohamed Bakari and Kai Kresse was broadcast live on Kenya’s “Switch TV”’s morning programme “Full Circle”, and is viewable here: https://www.switchtv.ke/watch-show/2244-Full-Circle-Academic-conference-on-knowledge

PUBLICATIONS

ZMO-Studien

A Geography of Jihad
Sokoto Jihadism and the Islamic Frontier in West Africa
Stephanie Zehnle

This book addresses the jihad movement that created the largest African state of the 19th century: the Sokoto Caliphate, existing for 99 years from 1804 until its military defeat by European colonial troops in 1903. The author carves out the entanglements of jihadist ideology and warfare with geographical concepts at Africa’s periphery of the Islamic world: geographical knowledge about the boundary between the “Land of Islam” and the “Land of War”; the pre-colonial construction of “the Muslim” and “the unbeliever”; and the transfer of ideas between political elites and mobile actors (traders, pilgrims, slaves, soldiers), whose reports helped shape new definitions of the African frontier of Islam. Research for this book is based on the study of a very wide range of Arabic and West African (Hausa, Fullulde) manuscripts. Their policies reveal the persistent reciprocity of jihadist warfare and territorial statehood, of Africa and the Middle East.

Monographs & Editorships


The end of a research programme in 2019 and the beginning of a new one in 2020 have accelerated movements and changes at ZMO. Several colleagues left ZMO during the second half of 2019, while new projects and new colleagues have joined. We bade farewell to Thiago Pinto Barbosa, a PhD candidate who left ZMO in October 2019 to take up a position as a lecturer within the ethnology department at the University of Bayreuth, and Dr. André Chappatte, who was starting from February 2020.

Due to the end of their contracts, the following colleagues also left ZMO: Drs. Khaled Adham, Ali Nobil Ahmad, Erdem Evren, Paola Galibazzi, Nils Riecken, Franziska Roy, and Izabela Orlowska, as well as PhD candidates Annegret Roelcke and Patrick Schukalla; Joseph Som I, Kyara Klau- smann and Tika Ramadhini left in January and February 2020.

From January 2020, PD Dr. Nora Lafi has taken up the position of Senior Research Fellow of the Max Weber Kolleg (Religion and Urbanity Research Group) at the University of Erfurt. She is working on a project entitled ‘Daily Life Spatialities of Religiosity in Ottoman Tunis’. From July 2020 onward, she has been awarded a 3-year grant by the Leibniz Collaborative Excellence for her project on “The Historicity of Democracy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds”. Partners in the project are the Leibniz Institute for European History (Mainz) and Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (Potsdam) as well as the Université de La Manouba in Tunis and Insitut Français Proche Orient in Amman. The team, led by Nora Lafi at ZMO, also consists of PD Dr. Manfred Sing (IEG), Prof. Frank Bösch (ZZF), Prof. Habib Kazdaghli (University of Manouba), and Dr. Falestine Nall (IFPO Jordan). Doctoral research grants based at the various partner institutes are also part of the programme and will be announced soon.

ZMO colleagues Dozent Dr. Samuli Schielke and Dr. Nitin Sinha have each been awarded considerable research grants. Schielke received a 2-year grant from the Thyssen Foundation for his new project ‘The Search for a Normal Life’ starting in 2020. Sinha received an ERC Consolidator Grant for his project ‘TIMEHIST – Timely Histories: A Social History of Time in South Asia’. The project, starting in October 2020, will run for five years. It will include two doctoral and two post-doctoral positions.

In September 2019, Noura Chalati has started as a PhD in the research group ‘Learning Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (Ed.):

Sinha, Nitin; Varma, Nitin; Jha, Pankaj (Eds.): Servants’ Past, Sixteenth to Twentieth Century, 2 vols, Orient Blackswan, 2019, open access see https://orient-blackswan.com/opaccess

Nils Riecken, Franziska Roy, and Izabela Orlowska, as well as PhD candidates Annegret Roelcke and Patrick Schukalla; Joseph Som I, Kyara Klau- smann and Tika Ramadhini left in January and February 2020.

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In September 2019, Noura Chalati has started as a PhD in the research group ‘Learning
Intelligence: The Exchange of Secret Service Knowledge between Germany and the Arab Middle East, 1960-2010’, the Volkswagen Freigeist project headed by Dr. Sophia Hoffmann. She studied political science at the FU Berlin and Université de Lyon as well as international relations of the Middle East at the University of Edinburgh. Her PhD project investigates the knowledge exchanges and security cooperation of the Syrian and East German (Ministry for State Security) intelligence agencies.

Prof. Dr. Sonja Hegasy, vice director at ZMO, began a one-year 50% visiting professorship for Postcolonial Studies at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in October 2019.

Dr. Steven Serels, a research fellow at ZMO in 2016/2017, has returned with a 3-year DFG position for his project on ‘The History of Poverty in the Southern Red Sea Region’, which began in November 2019.

In January, ZMO welcomed several new colleagues. Lotte Knote joined ZMO as a PhD research fellow. She studied African studies, Swahili and social and cultural anthropology in Berlin, London, Zanzibar, and Lamu. In her PhD project, she will be focusing on gendered livelihoods in aquaculture and climate change adaptation in the Zanzibar archipelago.

Postdoc research fellow Dr. Maria-Magdalena Fuchs came to ZMO from Princeton University (USA), where she just completed a PhD in the Department of Religion. She also holds a master’s degree in ‘Global and Imperial History’ from the University of Oxford (UK), and a bachelor’s degree in Islamic studies from the FU Berlin. Maria works on modern Islamic thought, the history of Islam in the modern period, and Muslim reform movements, both in South Asia and beyond. She conducted most of her fieldwork in Pakistan and has also published on the state of religious minorities in the country.

Dr. Aksana Ismailbekova completed her dissertation at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle. Based on her PhD dissertation, she wrote the monograph ‘Blood Ties and the Native Son: Poetics of Patronage in Kyrgyzstan’, which was published by Indiana University Press in 2017. At ZMO she is working on her Habilitation project ‘Future Building in Central Asia: Intergenerational Cooperation, Infrastructure, and Trans-local Mobilities’.

Dr. des. David Leupold is a research fellow in the research unit ‘Representations of the Past as a Mobilizing Force’. He was a 2018-2019 postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, Department of Sociology, and holds a doctoral degree from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, a master’s degree in social sciences from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, and a bachelor’s degree in Middle Eastern studies from the Otto-Friedrich Universität Bamberg. In his current research, he is exploring the legacy of late-soviet urban planning as ‘relicts of (another) future’.

Dr. Jacob Nehrenberg is a Research Fellow at ZMO within the research group on ‘Environment and Justice’. He completed his PhD in anthropology at University of Toronto in 2018, and was recently a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Anthropology at York University. He conducts research on livelihoods, pluralism, and valuations of land in the context of an extractive economy in the Papua region of eastern Indonesia.

Dr. Jeffrey Culang, Volkswagen/Mellon Fellow has joined ZMO for the year 2020. He earned his PhD in history from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His work at ZMO will focus on law, morality, and secularism in Egypt.

As AvH Fellows, ZMO has welcomed Dr. Talha Çiçek, Assistant Professor of History, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, Istanbul Medeniyet University (October 2019 - September 2020), working on ‘The Stubborn Mobility: Nomads and the Political Agency, 1920-2018’, and Dr. Fuat Dündar, an associate professor at the ToBB-ETÜ University in Ankara and AvH fellow at ZMO between September 2019 and February 2020. He is working on a manuscript examining the open-door policy of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey (mid-19th to mid-20th centuries).

Further, ZMO hosted the following Visiting Research Fellows in the second half of 2019: Prof. Atiyah Ahmad, George Washington University, Washington, DC, ‘Halal Tourism: Gendered Muslim Aspirations and Material Counterpoints Amidst the Spoils of War in the Middle East’ (September 2019); Dr. Clélia Coret, Institut des Mondes Africains, Paris, ‘Linguistic contacts on the East African Coast. Local informants and German missionaries in the co-production of linguistic knowledge, 1886-1939’ (September-October 2019); Dr. Stephen Ogundipe, Olefemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, ‘The City as a Muse: The Aesthetics of Cities in Contemporary African Poetry’ (postponed his stay at ZMO to September-October 2019), and Dr. Rasheed Olaniyi, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, ‘Mining and Violence in Northern Nigeria, 1980s-2000s’ (September-October 2019).

Further guests were invited to stay for shorter terms at ZMO to develop new projects: Dr. Michael Baers, ‘Conflicted Images: Photography as Discursive Tool within the Context of Intractable Conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (July-August); Dr. Suaad Al Ghafal, ‘Public Space for Peace and Contention: Maydāʾ al-Shuhādi (Martyrs’ Square) Shaping Political and Social Spheres of the City of Tripoli, Libya’ (August-October 2019); Dr. Jasmin Mahazi, Alumna BGSMS, ‘Knowledge practices and transfers between generations through time and space along the Swahili coast’ (September-November 2019); Dr. Jesko Schmoller, Perm State University, Russia, ‘Building Brotherhood: The Production of Sufi Sociabilities in the Russian Urals’ (September-December 2019); and Dr. Victoria Mettsch, University of Vienna, (November-December 2019).
Awards & Prizes

Dr. Veronica Ferreri, a colleague in the research project ‘Normality and Crisis: Memories of Everyday Life in Syria as a Chance for a New Start in Germany’ is a joint-winner of the Leigh Douglas Memorial Prize for 2019, awarded by BRISMES (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies) for her dissertation ‘A State of Permanent Loss, War and Displacement in Syria and Lebanon’. The prize goes to the writer of the best PhD dissertation on a Middle Eastern topic in the social sciences or humanities awarded by a British University.

Georg Forster Award

Prof. Dr. Abdulkader Tayob, Chair in Islam, African Publics and Religious Values at the University of Cape Town, was recently awarded with a prestigious Georg Forster Research Award by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. He had been nominated by Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient and will be cooperating closely with ZMO colleagues over the course of the next few years. For more, see https://fdw-online.de/de/news730319

Fritz Steppat Prize 2020

The Association for the Advancement of the ZMO e.V., has invited submissions for the fourth Fritz Steppat Prize for an outstanding scientific text by a young researcher. Considered for the prize are final theses and other scientific texts by students, graduates, and doctoral candidates in the fields represented at ZMO and supervised by members of the Association for the Advancement of the ZMO, ZMO alumni, or researchers who currently work at ZMO. A decision will be taken in summer 2020.

Website & social media

ZMO relaunched its website on 9 December 2019. It now displays the new ZMO corporate design, comes with a modern look, and has several new functions (i.e. an event calendar). We have been working on the new website and the corporate design with the design agency berbach over the course of the last two years. Visit us at www.leibniz-zmo.de

In autumn 2019, ZMO extended its social media activities to Soundcloud and Twitter. On Soundcloud, we regularly upload lectures, colloquium sessions, etc., and make them available as podcasts. You can find us here: https://soundcloud.com/user-102187368

On Twitter, we regularly share news on ZMO and connect with colleagues and the media. Follow us: @ZMO_Berlin

ZMO Colloquium summer 2020

see https://www.zmo.de/veranstaltungen/vortragsreihen/zmo-kolloquium-summersemester-2020


Podiumsdiskussion


Lecture

31 March 2020, ZMO

Good Neighbors: Jews and Muslims in Interwar Berlin, Gerdien Jonker, 2 pm; Mosque Archives as Sources for Historical Research: The Case of Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Gerdien Jonker and Maria-Magdalene Fuchs, 3 pm

For more see https://www.zmo.de/veranstaltungen