



# ZMO-Colloquium

Thursday, 26 September 2019, 5 pm

## Re-thinking towards We-thinking. Reflections on Epistemic Decolonization

Lecture by Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

### Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin

Why is it that too many intellectual cultures, intellectual histories, and theoretical contributions of individual thinkers from economically and politically marginalized regions of the world in the so-called 'global South' are still little known, underexplored and undervalued? I would like to reflect on this from three different but mutually entangled perspectives. One is informed by my own approach of critical area studies, and touches upon the problem of embracing the plurality of ontological ecologies on our globe. Another one is (geo-)politically inspired. It addresses the issue of global power relations that are mirrored, among others, in the gap between hegemonic and non-hegemonic languages, and the assumed necessity of generating applied knowledge rather than basic theoretical thought. A third one, related to the previous two, highlights the notion of local knowledge. Attending to the "why" question above, I suggest that local knowledge can contribute to a thorough re-thinking of predominant (Eurocentric) concepts and lead to what I would like to call "we-thinking". The three perspectives are

meant to open a forum for discussion and motivate the building of connections that transform what is already being connected – for instance through acts of translation. If epistemic decolonization were to be encouraged, strengthening connectivities may be suggested as a means to do so.

**Claudia Derichs** is professor of Transregional Southeast Asian Studies at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany. She has studied Japanese and Arabic in Bonn, Tokyo and Cairo and holds a PhD in Japanese (1994, University of Bonn, Germany). She is a member of various editorial boards, advisory boards, selection and evaluation committees, and was awarded a Heisenberg scholarship by the German Science Foundation. Prior research interests are political transition in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, as well as gender and development politics in Asia and the Middle East. She specializes in transregional studies and works towards new orientations in Area Studies.

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Leibniz-Zentrum  
Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33 · 14129 Berlin  
T +49 30 80307-0  
F +49 30 80307-210  
zmo@zmo.de  
www.leibniz-zmo.de