



## ZMO-Colloquium

Thursday, 6 June 2019, 5 pm

### **Anthropology of Development, Today: Towards an Analysis of the Role of Critique as Mover of Social Processes**

Lecture by **Ursula Rao** (University of Leipzig)

This talk develops a new vision for an Anthropology of Development. In recent years, the anthropological analysis of governance processes has suggested that investment in technocratic forms of rule have shrunk the space for political action and depoliticized development. While this position assumes that development interventions are confident and final, an analysis of practice shows that interventions tend to be open ended, provisional and incomplete. In fact, today, development projects are often perceived as experiments that are expected to teach the necessary lessons to be learned for a better future. Improvement is an aspiration that can be postponed, sometimes for every.

In this situation Ursula Rao proposes an analysis of the role and function of critique and feedback loops as producing critical knowledge about the inner dynamics of development interventions. Which indicators are used to argue about a policy's efficacy and which experiences lead to critique and protest? To illustrate her style of analysis and how it can be deployed, she will briefly introduce the example of an Indian health insurance and show how those involved in its

role-out have fed variable sets of data into communicate processes to protest and instigate changes, which lead to new experiences and new forms of critique.

**Professor Dr Ursula Rao** is an urban anthropologist researching in India. The central focus of her work is changing power relations in rapidly globalising cities, with regards to three different topics: (1) the interaction between urban poor and state agencies in a landscape of shifting ideologies of urbanity and social security; (2) the changing role of news media for shaping urban politics; (3) The role of religious institutions and ritual performances for renegotiating social relations. Her current work focusses on e-governance and biometric technology. Ursula Rao is a member of the research network Law, Organization, Science and Technology (LOST).

#### **Venue**

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin