



Knowledge Transfer

Since its foundation, ZMO has put significant stress on transferring the results of its research and its expertise into society. Basic research on non-Western histories and cultures provides the essential depth for understanding current conflicts and debates. ZMO contributes to a more discerning view of the so-called Islamic world by offering background information to the media and providing expert interview partners.

ZMO research findings are made available to different target groups, among them politicians, journalists, artists, and the broader public. The centre therefore organises events on current scientific and political topics in cooperation with national and international institutions. Here it cooperates especially with intermediary organisations, cultural associations, adult education centres, and political foundations in Germany.

Publications

ZMO publishes a refereed book series entitled *Studien*, which consists of monographs submitted by internal and external researchers, as well as edited volumes. In addition, fellows publish articles and monographs in the relevant international journals and series. Since 2010, ZMO offers the two refereed online series *Programmatic Texts* and *Working Papers*.

The *Programmatic Texts* publish wider conceptual articles engaging with the interdisciplinary and inter-regional research conducted at ZMO. The series provides a platform for authors to present and discuss innovative contributions to current theoretical and comparative debates in relation to ZMO's programmatic research agenda. *Working Papers* is a series of publications that reflect developments and discussions related to ZMO research projects. Texts are usually empirically based and regionally focused and may also represent intermediate results of research.

Furthermore, ZMO publishes biannually the *Orient Bulletin* and a regular report which informs about the events of the research year.

Library

The library of Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient was founded in 1992 and is conceived as a specialised library around ZMO's main research fields. It pursues the aim of acquiring new publications in research disciplines such as history, anthropology, and political science with a focus on countries of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Currently the library holds more than 80,000 titles and 60 periodicals. The library emphasises the maintenance of an up-to-date stock of research literature and especially the acquisition of publications released in countries covered by ZMO's research.

Apart from this regular stock, the library holds different special collections of books and archival material. The largest collection comprises about 9,000 volumes and 300 periodicals with a focus on Oriental studies. They were originally part of a section library of the former Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic. In addition, the special collections comprise the private research library on Islamic studies donated by Fritz Steppat and the research estates donated by Africanist Jürgen Herzog, Middle East historian Gerhard Höpp, and Indologist Horst Krüger. The books of these collections are recorded in the online catalogue. The archival material of the collections is largely digitised and accessible via an electronic inventory.

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Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) is the only German research institute devoted to an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia from a historical perspective. Current research focuses on the interaction between predominantly Muslim societies and their relations with non-Muslim neighbours.

ZMO was founded in 1996 as an independent non-profit research center and is part of the Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V. On 1 January 2017, ZMO was admitted to the joint research promotion by the Bund-Länder Commission and became a member of the Leibniz Association. Its current director is Prof. Dr. Ulrike Freitag, a Modern Middle East historian.

The centre's main research programme, "Muslim Worlds – World of Islam? Conceptions, Practices and Crises of the Global" (2008-2019), explores a broad spectrum of historical and contemporary dynamics within and between Asian and African societies since the 16th century, as well as their connections to Europe. Approximately 40 fellows are currently working in four research units:

I Progress: Ideas, Agents, Symbols

II Politics of Resources

III Trajectories of Lives and Knowledge

IV Cities as Laboratories of Change



Research Unit I

Progress: Ideas, Agents, Symbols

Head of Research Unit: PD Dr. Katrin Bromber

Do people in Muslim-majority societies conceive of progress in a specific way? How does religion influence ideas and concrete actions to alter or maintain a socio-economic status quo? To answer these questions, the research unit works with a broad definition of progress as the tension between the production and the destruction of possibilities for the future. It argues that if this future is a blank screen on which realisations of progress are projected, individuals and collectives must grapple with constantly changing horizons of expectations. Case studies of progress from Africa and Asia during the Cold War and contemporary times pay heed to ideological and social formations aspiring to be, or already considered, progressive. These formations are investigated with regard to emerging collective, institutional, and individual forms of agency, the ideas that underpin them, and their relationship to powerful symbolic representations in the urban fabric and the human body.

Research Unit II

Politics of Resources

Head of Research Unit: Dr. Katharina Lange

This research unit explores the extraction, use, and valuation of natural resources in Islamicate societies. Focusing on the perspectives of local social actors, it investigates when and how a specific piece of land, a watercourse, or timber acquires or changes its value. Access to vital substances such as water and land, conflicts about their distribution, and the repercussions of oil and uranium extraction directly and existentially affect Muslim and non-Muslim social actors. Local changes are entangled with translocal circulatory and exclusionary processes. When and how do local social actors initiate, accommodate, or resist and challenge such changes? Contestations about the proper way of using natural resources touch on wider questions about social and environmental justice and on the relation between humankind and "nature". Muslim social actors debate these issues with reference to religious norms and systems of meaning, among other things.

Research Unit III

Trajectories of Lives and Knowledge

Head of Research Unit: Dr. Heike Liebau

The research unit *Trajectories of Lives and Knowledge* focuses on the intersection of lifeworlds and practices of knowledge production in different historical, regional, and political constellations. Biographical approaches not only open a window to understand broader social processes, but also reveal social tensions entangled in the production of knowledge. By exploring the translocal life trajectories of individuals and groups, mostly from colonial and postcolonial contexts in Africa and Asia, we look at the intersections of subjectivity, temporality, and social practices in processes of knowledge production. What resources do people mobilise to deal with institutional challenges and normative expectations of their social environment? How are different forms of knowledge (religious, professional, practical, everyday) interrelated and under which circumstances do their use and formation change? Based on the assumption that individuals are at the same time subjects and objects of socially contested forms of knowledge, we also aim to connect our studies of past and contemporary societies with reflections on our own positionality as (academic) observers.

Research Unit IV

Cities as Laboratories of Change

Head of Research Unit: Dr. André Chappatte

How is the city a site of change? This research unit is set in West Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa during the 19th to 21st centuries. It investigates how the very nature of the city, which includes large populations, closely packed settlements, migration, capital exchange, and seats of political power, makes it a place of novelties and transformations. The city often leads the way to new social relations, cultural practices, industry and technology, infrastructure, and governance. And by focusing on cities in the "Muslim worlds", the project shows how the non-Western world contributes to past and present understandings of urbanity. The research unit is divided into three subfields. First, the project interrogates the social, material, and economic development of cities. Second, the project explores the relationship between the city and civic engagement. Third, the project analyses the different ideologies and visions of city and urbanity.