

EDITORIAL

Ulrike Freitag

What is the link between value-added tax and academic cooperation? Until some months ago, everyone would have denied such a nexus. And yet, in an interpretation of European law that seems at odds with common sense, the cooperation between universities and between universities and publicly funded extra-university research institutes will be taxed

from 2023 onward. While most people might consider the rather absurd fact that one publicly funded institution pays taxes on cooperation with another publicly funded institution to be simply another aberration, it is an existential question for academic cooperation, as the quite substantial tax will be paid out of budgets that have been allocated without factoring it in.

This means that these institutions will have to make cuts, and the smaller the institution the more these cuts will bite into vital functions. For a small centre like ZMO, this might entail the need to cut a full academic position out of a total of 15. Given the regional, disciplinary, and historical scope of our institute, this amounts to a severe reduction for no obvious reason.

25 years of Research in the Humanities – Some Reflections

Ulrike Freitag

The Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V., the legal entity comprising the Leibniz institutes Zentrum Moderner Orient, Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung (ZfL), and the Zentrum für Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS), is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Given their tenuous beginnings as positively evaluated entities of the East German Academy of Sciences for which no one had a clear vision and the present national and international reputation of the three centres, this is a remarkable success story. This success certainly was no foregone conclusion when the German Science Council recommended in 1991 to create research centres in the humanities. The long road to this goal, which was in fact only institutionally achieved in 2017 with the integration

in the Leibniz Association, has been masterly recounted by Sigrid Weigel in a publication entitled **25 Jahre Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin** (GWZ Berlin, 2021). I will use this opportunity to thank the small but determined group of academics involved in the initial evaluations and debates for their determination and the State of Berlin as well as members of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research for their willingness to support what initially looked like a problematic experiment through a series of larval stages to what Weigel calls a model case.

What, then, constitutes a model case for research in the humanities and, in particular, for the special field studied at ZMO? Free from regular teaching obligations,

scholars at ZMO organize their research in interdisciplinary research units which cover different areas and historical periods. This requires and

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Radio's Warm Wavelengths in the Cold War

"The Sound of Friendship", film screening, 19 October 2021, Funkhaus Berlin

Anandita Bajpai and Lena Herzog



Funkhaus Berlin, where Radio Berlin International was once based

"Neither our station nor the German Democratic Republic will disappear into the folds of history too soon. The memories of the good and bad times will remain in our hearts here in Berlin. And maybe with you, our listeners."

On 2 October 1990, when the GDR's international broadcasting station Radio Berlin International (RBI) shut down with these last words, the station's voice went silent not only in Germany, but also in several places across the globe. The documentary film *The Sound of Friendship: Warm Wavelengths in a Cold, Cold War* by ZMO research fellow Anandita Bajpai traces memories of RBI from the perspective of its moderators and journalists, as well as its listeners in India. Tracing the trajectory of the station's Hindi programme (1967–1990) 31 years after the station's closure, the film takes viewers from locales in Berlin to those in Madhepura, Bihar in India and revives the memories of a Listeners' Club called the "Lenin Club". We are introduced to Arvind Srivastava, founder of the Club, and visit the attic of his home-stead, which houses several material relics of both RBI and the GDR. Among these are posters, peak caps, souvenirs, magazines, pennants, flags, badges, and several postcards Srivastava received from RBI in the 1970s and '80s. Perusing these objects, he fondly recalls his memories of the show and its content, the presenters, their voices, and the "warmth" that tied two continents.

Studio 2, Funkhaus Berlin



For Indian listeners of RBI, what made the station special was the combination of East German and Indian voices that presented the programme in Hindi, a unique selling point that distinguished the station from other radio broadcasters like Deutsche Welle and BBC, where only Indians could moderate the show. The film shares the perspective of former RBI journalists like Friedemann Schlender, Sabine Imhof, and Mahesh Jha, who recall the friendships that evolved with their listeners a continent away. These personal connections are the film's focal point. It brings together listeners and presenters, who were in regular exchange but never met in person.

RBI, like all radio broadcasters of the time, had political ambitions informed by Cold War contexts, but the station became a means for establishing ties that went beyond the immediate ideological motivations of the GDR. This proximity was also achieved by paying great attention to listeners'

queries. Besides those on the GDR's stance on anti-imperialism, the world peace movement, and the Afro-Asian solidarity movement, many questions related to everyday life in the GDR.

The film was shown in a pre-screening on 19 October 2021 at the Funkhaus in Berlin, where RBI (among other radio stations in the GDR) was once based. Among the over 100 guests were a number of former RBI employees. While some of them were re-employed by Deutsche Welle (21 out of approximately 250 employees at RBI, 3 from the Hindi Division), most lost their jobs overnight after the station's closure. In the panel discussion that followed the screening, eight former RBI staff members recalled RBI days, charging the event with emotions. Besides seeing the film and experiencing the atmosphere of the space where it was aired, the audience had the opportunity to listen to one witness account after another as presenters shared their memories of the time,



Panel discussion after the screening. From left to right: Dan Gatzmaga, Mahesh, Christa Tragelehn, Marita Bhattacharya, Sabine Imhof, Arif Nqvi, Klaus Fischer, Ujjwal Bhattacharya, Peter Kleinhempel, Anandita Bajpai, Sonja Hegasy

how they came in touch with listeners in India, and how exchange was cultivated over the years. Even if virtually, Arvind Srivastava and cinematographer/co-writer Jyothidas KV joined the event online to experience the mood of the evening.

Anandita Bajpai has made the film to supplement her ongoing research on the entangled trajectories of two German (West and East) radio stations in India during the Cold War years. It places the acoustic competition between Deutsche Welle and Radio Berlin International in the larger Cold War context and particularly addresses the role of media in shaping transnational listening publics. The film explores the lesser-known chapter of the GDR's international face and transnational ties that often

crossed borders during the Cold War. More importantly, it captures the affects, sounds, silences, emotions, and loud voices that often do not fit the limitations of academic writing.

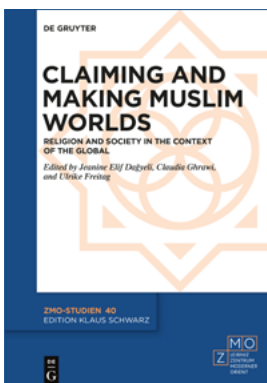
The film not only sheds light on facts and historical developments in the trajectory of the radio station's Hindi programme, but also on affective, emotional ties. One of the scenes, in which Sabine Imhof recounts her meeting with one of her ardent listeners in India, ten years after RBI's closure, sums the essence of these emotional ties: "The photo of our Hindi team, we had sent it to some [listeners], so they would also have an image of us. And others had sent their photos to us, so that we would know what they looked like. But, before anything else, they knew

our voices! And yes, we had to offer them a lot of love, because the GDR was materially not so strong. So, all we could offer was something personal. And we did!"

THE SOUND OF FRIENDSHIP: WARM WAVELENGTHS IN A COLD, COLD WAR
 A FILM BY ANANDITA BAJPAI (ZMO)
 EDITED BY DAN GATZMAGA
 CINEMATOGRAPHY AND CO-WRITING: JYOTHIDAS KV
 CINEMATOGRAPHY AND COLOUR-GRADING: DAN GATZMAGA
 MUSIC: NITIN SINHA AND REYAZUL HAQUE
 SOUND MIX: JONAS ALBANI
 PRODUCED BY: ANANDITA BAJPAI AND LEIBNIZ-ZENTRUM MODERNER ORIENT
 LANGUAGE: GERMAN AND HINDI WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES
 DURATION: 65 MINUTES
 TRAILER: [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=T4QLIM_JFLW](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4QLIM_JFLW)

PUBLICATIONS

ZMO-STUDIEN



Claiming and Making Muslim Worlds Religion and Society in the Context of the Global

Jeanine Elif Dağyeli, Claudia Ghrawi, Ulrike Freitag (Eds.)

ZMO-Studien 40, 299p., DeGruyter, 2021, ISBN 978-3-11-072676-3

To what extent can Islam be localized in an increasingly interconnected world? The contributions to this volume investigate different facets of Muslim lives in the context of increasingly dense transregional connections, highlighting how the circulation of ideas about 'Muslimness' contributed to the shaping of specific ideas about what constitutes Islam and its role in society and politics. Infrastructural changes have prompted the intensification of scholarly and trade networks, prompted the circulation of new literary genres or shaped stereotypical images of Muslims. This, in turn, had consequences in widely differing fields such as self-representation and governance of Muslims. The contributions in this volume explore this issue in geographical contexts ranging from South Asia to Europe and the US. Coming from the disciplines of history, anthropology, religious studies, literary studies and political science, the authors collectively demonstrate the need to combine a translocal perspective with very specific local and historical constellations. The book complicates conventional academic divisions and invites to think in historically specific translocal contexts. The ZMO Studie is open access available: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110726534>