



**Institutskolloquium
Ethnologie**
*Donnerstags 16:00 c.t.,
Hörsaal Ethnologie,
Theaterplatz 15*

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Dr. Patrice Ladwig (MPI MMG)

'The empty monastery'. Buddhism and the transformation of monastic education in Laos between urbanization and rural migration.

In the last 20 years, Laos has undergone an unprecedented process of economic modernization that has also left its marks on Buddhism and monastic institutions. Increasing social differentiation, rapid urbanization, rural spatial mobility and new possibilities in the educational sector have led to social and cultural transformations that directly impinge on religious actors, their values and practices. Especially the social background of Buddhist monks and novices, and the spatial location of temples and monastic schools are affected by these processes: Although ordination as a monk or novice has traditionally been one option for social and spatial upward mobility for poor peasant sons, this process has accelerated to such a degree that monasteries in some rural areas have been almost emptied, while urban temples are flooded with young novices seeking further education and the diversity of city life. By drawing on data from long-term fieldwork in monasteries in the Lao capital Vientiane, and smaller temples in more remote province, the paper will explore the increasing gap of rural and urban Buddhism and its effects on monastic education and the administration of temples. More specifically, the paper will also highlight the transformations of religious and cultural knowledge, and associated ritual practices have undergone in this context.



Patrice Ladwig studied Social Anthropology and Sociology in Germany, France and the UK, and obtained his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2008. He worked at the University of Bristol, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and was visiting professor at the University of Zürich and the University of Hamburg. With a regional focus on mainland Southeast Asia (primarily Laos & Thailand), he works on the anthropology of Theravada Buddhism, death and funeral cultures, religion & communist movements, colonialism, and a few other things.