



## – Institute's Colloquium –

**Dr. Patrick Desplat**  
**Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen**

### **Aspirations, Mistrust and the Politics of Silence in Coastal Madagascar**

This presentation raises issues that frequently recurs in anthropological perspectives on Madagascar: How people negotiate their way through social problems posed by the tension between a common rhetoric of equality and the reality of hierarchies and how, in addressing this problem in practice, speech and attitudes, they re-create, invert and subvert it. While public discourses encompass notions of solidarity, kinship and sharing, social relations are more than often cast in witchcraft-like idioms of envy, mistrust and suspicion.

My analysis rests on the desires and wishes of young students and graduates in urban Mahajanga to transcend inequalities that kept some from achieving prosperity. Aspirations, the mental work of thinking, imagining, and reasoning a 'better life', thus also involve the perils of standing out, including the dreads of failure and public humiliation. Against this backdrop, I will first explore the local Malagasy concept of *mahitahita* ("to see [far]"), the capacity of searching for new values and striving to acquire them. At the same time, I will scrutinize attitudes of mistrust and rhetorical strategies of silence to engage more closely with the navigational process of educated Malagasy youth.

**Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**4-6 p.m.**

**Institute of Ethnology**

**Stuttstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)**

**Everybody is welcome!**