

Junior Fellowship für Dr. Obvious Katsaura: Violence and Enchanted Urbanisms: Magico-religion, Ritualism and Mediation of Violence in Johannesburg

Initiative: Wissen für morgen – Kooperative Forschungsvorhaben im subsaharischen Afrika (beendet)

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This study focuses on the role of magico-religious beliefs and practices, rituals and associated institutions in the regulation of uncertainties and fears generated by urban violence. The backdrop of this project is the observation that (fear of) urban violence, crime and terrorism are some of the foremost global challenges of the 21st century; especially in contexts of (a) weak, failing, and sometimes predatory governments, and (b) challenges of urban social inequality, poverty and unemployment. Johannesburg, a city internationally known for high levels of violence and crime, provides a worthwhile laboratory for understanding the cultural and socio-political consequences and regulation of episodic and everyday (fear of) violence. To understand how urbanites survive in contexts marred by (fear of) violence and crime and related uncertainty, I suggest an examination of the role of religion, magic and ritual as (potential) coping and regulatory socio-psychological resources. Such resources, which are marginally appreciated in urban studies literature, enable resilience and flexibility of urbanites in trying to cope with these circumstances. My understanding and interpretation of magico-religious beliefs, practices and rituals in the mediation of urban violence is informed by an appreciation of interdisciplinary and triangulated theoretical approaches. As a foundational reference point, I benefit from the work of classical social theorists such as Durkheim, Weber and Marx in my endeavour to understand the place of magico-religious and ritual practices in violence-laden urbanised (or industrialised) contexts.

Projektbeteiligte

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