



Annual Theme: Refugees in the City

EUME

Europa im Nahen Osten
Der Nahe Osten in Europa

Urban Studies Seminar
2015 - 2016

Chaired by Prof Ulrike Freitag and Dr Nora Lafi
Monday, 23 May 2016, 5 pm

“Ils viennent du Nord”: Refugees Reviving Social Ties in Niamey in the Aftermath of the 2012 War in Mali

Lecture by Abdoulaye Sounaye (ZMO)

Twice a month,
Mondays 5 pm - 7 pm

Venue:

Conference Hall
Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33
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As a direct consequence of the Libyan crisis, the war in Mali in 2012 sent thousands of inhabitants of northern Mali into Niger, prompting an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Sahel. The consequences of this disruption of communal life and livelihood are expected to have a lasting impact on the political economy of the region. In fact, five years after the official end of the conflict following French military intervention, many have yet to return to their hometowns, preferring to settle in Niamey, the main urban center in the area. In this presentation, I will focus on a group of northern-Malians who found refuge in several quarters of Niamey, sometimes with the assistance of International and local organizations, but mostly with relatives and acquaintances as they seek to *reconstruct* their lives, *rebuild* their individual networks or simply *wait* for the situation to “normalize” in their home country. As they settled in the city, for many, the “refugee status” proved to be an opportunity that allows them to develop economic activities, revive social ties with close and distant relatives while they cope with the effects of displacement and the challenges of living in an urban center. I will elaborate on three cases focusing on their strategies to make do away from their native Mali, and how they renegotiate belonging, create new networks in a city they don’t know, yet not completely foreign to them.

Abdoulaye Sounaye is a research fellow at ZMO and works on Salafism in Niger and West Africa. His current project is on Youth and Religiosity in the Urban Context. He has been working on Islam in West Africa for the last 10 years and is particularly interested in the ways in which religious dynamics affect community formations and sociopolitical interactions.