



Progress and Its Discontents



Two young men performing sermon in Niamey, Niger. Photo: Abdoulaye Sounaye, 2012



Women attending sermon in Niamey, Niger. Photo: Abdoulaye Sounaye, 2012



Diamond culture – a Gambian youth making a "diamond" from the silver paper of a cigarette pack. Photo: Paolo Gaibazzi, 2007

Everyday Religiosity and Islamic Sermons Among Youth in Niger

Dr Abdoulaye Sounaye

This project examines how young Muslims (Sunnance) appropriate the Islamic sermon in Niamey, Niger, while they seek to popularise the tradition of the prophet Muhammad (Sunna). Claiming to serve Islam (adina goyo), they have created social spaces and communal practices that are gradually redefining Muslim subjectivities and sociabilities in the urban context. The study will highlight how the Islamic sermon (wazu) and the Sunna are understood and put to work in the lives of young Sunnance. This project will contribute to the social theory of Islamic reform discourses and practices, and in particular how their popularisation affects their overall agenda. It will also help us to grasp some of the processes through which youth have become socio-religious shifters whilst authorising themselves to speak on behalf of Islam. This goal will be achieved by focusing on the trajectories of individual preachers, their media culture (CD/DVD sermons, Islamic discotheque and Islamic studio), and the ritualisation of the act of going to wazu.

Diamonds, Dollars and Dynasties: A West African Muslim Trade Diaspora in Angola's Boom Economy

Dr Paolo Gaibazzi

Since the end of the long civil war in 2002, Angola has undergone rapid economic growth and social change. Oil and diamond exports have fuelled a commercial bonanza, attracting investors from across the world, including experienced traders from West Africa. Building on previous research on longstanding commercial dynasties in the Gambia valley, this project aims to understand how the legacy of West African Muslim trade mediates migrant traders' participation in Angola's globalised market economy and its volatile socio-political situation, as well as in the worldwide commercial circuits and diasporic networks. It pays attention to the institutional, social and cultural practices that enable Gambian traders to produce and regulate the mobility of people, goods and capital in order to (re-)produce success. Far from solely considering material aspects of trade migration, the project also explores diaspora formation as a socio-cultural laboratory, in particular whether and how traders respond and appropriate the proliferating narratives of progress and discontent surrounding Angola's boom economy.