

The Work of State Imageries: Coping with Intricacies of the Everyday in Liberia's Post-Conflict Context

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Aim of this project is to understand how imageries of governance and the state are shaped and how they influence everyday practice of the local population in a post-conflict setting. The field of enquiry is the urban and peri-urban space of Liberia, a country that had suffered 14 years of conflict. The devastation of infrastructures and poorly functioning public services still create challenges to the local actors and their livelihoods.



Figure: Creating Social Order in Central Monrovia, Liberia.

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*"The police (...), the security are working. But they are not working according to... like normal days."
(Interview in West Point, Monrovia, 2010)*

Background

Imageries of governance and the state have a vast impact on actors and how they arrange their everyday life. This project looks at how ordinary people cope with the difficult social and economic conditions in the aftermath of the West African Conflict. Expectations towards the state are enormous, the state itself is weak and limited.

Specific Objectives/Research Questions

The aim of this project is to examine what imageries of governance and the state exist, if and how new imageries emerge and how they are negotiated and shaped. How do ordinary people in a peri-urban and urban setting try to make a living? How do they cope with the precarious delivery of common and public goods such as security or access to resources such as water, food, education or medical services? How do new forms of governance emerge in the context of a post-conflict society?

Methodology

The Emic Evaluation Approach (EEA) triangulates three components 1) Mapping the Actors; 2) Social Discourse Analysis including interviews, non-verbal statements or media; and 3) Practice Analysis. The EEA enables evaluating data from cross-cutting perspectives.

Expected/First Results

Actors respond to the malfunctioning public institutions by forming groups of collective action. This project focuses on local groups reestablishing social order and the provision of public and common goods, such as security by youth groups or health by collaboration of women.

Relevance

Gaining insights on how actors evaluate and cope with a post-conflict situation and how the international community could deliver efficient and adequate support.