



Sacralizing Security: Religion, Violence and Authority in Mega-Cities of the Global South

Informe

Información del proyecto

SACRASEC

Identificador del acuerdo de subvención:
818707

[Sitio web del proyecto](#)

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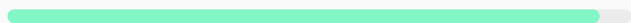
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Este proyecto figura en...



Investigación y estrategias para prevenir la radicalización y el extremismo violento

Periodic Reporting for period 3 - SACRASEC (Sacralizing Security: Religion, Violence and Authority in Mega-Cities of the Global South)

Período documentado: 2022-09-01 hasta 2024-02-29

Resumen del contexto y de los objetivos generales del proyecto



In many mega-cities of the Global South, state institutions compete and collaborate with other organizations that offer security to urban residents. In a number of such contexts, religious organizations and vigilantes have merged to become alternative governance organizations. The emergence of religious vigilantes suggests a different connection between religion and violence than emphasized in much research on religious fundamentalism and terrorism. While religious vigilantes use violence systematically, they generally do not aim to overthrow the state, nor do they seek a global audience to witness their violence. They operate side-by-side with state actors to maintain order. Major questions are: why do mega-city residents grant these religious vigilantes authority? And what is the role of religion in the legitimation of vigilante practices? The research project SACRASEC analyzes the production of authority of religious vigilantes in mega-cities of the Global South through an ethnographic comparison of three mega-cities. The case studies focus on Christian and Afro-Brazilian religion in Rio de Janeiro; Christian, Islamic and Indigenous religion in Lagos; and Islamic and Indigenous religion in Jakarta.

The number of mega-cities in the world is rising and so is the percentage of people with religious adherence. This research will provide critically needed knowledge on the power structures in mega-cities of the Global South, and in so doing will contribute important insights to policies aimed at improving human security. Determining the role of religion in the authority of religious vigilantes is essential in understanding how the contemporary governance of urban populations in mega-cities of the Global South works. Researching the role and place of religion in relation to authority and violence beyond terrorism and fundamentalism sheds new light on its potentiality to produce order in shifting political landscapes such as those of mega-cities. Analysing the material religion of vigilantes pushes forward the methodology and theory of conflict and security studies.

Trabajo realizado desde el comienzo del proyecto hasta el final del período abarcado por el informe y los principales resultados hasta la fecha



The aim of SACRASEC is to determine the role of religion in production of the authority of alternative governance organizations in mega-cities of the Global South, as evidenced in Rio de Janeiro, Lagos and Jakarta. The main research objectives are to:

- Document which religious ideologies, symbols, materials and practices are popular among residents of the selected mega-cities of the Global South;
- Identify, the religious ideologies, symbols, materials and practices, that are part of vigilante organizations in the selected mega-cities of the Global South;
- Identify the material culture (icons, banners, music, sounds, statues) of religious vigilante organizations and record how urban residents experience and interpret these aspects of religious material culture;
- Determine how these ideologies, symbols, materials and practices contribute to the authority of alternative governance structures that compete and/or overlap with state institutions;
- Explain by cross case comparison why certain religious ideologies, symbols, materials and practices appear more prominently in vigilante organizations in mega-cities of the Global South than other religious ideologies, symbols, materials and practices;

The first years of the research project were dedicated to the selection and training of the team of researchers (PhDs and Postdocs) and preparing for fieldwork in different locations in the world. Following the original research program lay-out and schedule, SACRASEC team members have prepared for fieldwork (and data collection) in the first year(s) of the research project. Due to covid-19, most of the preliminary fieldwork has been done online via remote ethnography.

Researchers have completed their preliminary online fieldwork phase, in which they primarily identified the vernacular use of the prime categories of this research (religious, secular, secure, insecure, justice, injustice, community, outsiders) and recorded the local expressions of (in)security and religiosity. This period was followed by a period of 'analysis and calibration' in which we performed cross-case comparison.

The team is currently in the process of conducting their second phase of ethnographic fieldwork. Researchers are currently conducting in-depth participant observation, while simultaneously collecting life histories, employing qualitative network analysis, and conducting forms of sensory ethnography. The second phase of fieldwork also involves focussed and axial coding, which will allow the team to corroborate the relations between the prime categories as listed above with the new data gathered during fieldwork.

Due to delays caused by global travel bans and lockdowns related to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are still in the middle of our data-collection process. Due to the nature of ethnographic data collection that is specifically employed in the service of grounded theory, we have not yet arrived at a stage where we can share specific results. The synthetic work that is necessary to explain the role of religion in the

authority of vigilantes in contexts of hybrid governance in the three mega-cities, will happen during the phase of theoretical coding that will follow the current fieldwork phase.

The major achievements during the preparation phase were:

- International online workshop "Post-secular Policing" (<https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/postsecular-policing-workshop>) on April 16th, 2021. This workshop has led to a special issue proposal with the acclaimed journal Social Analysis (Berghahn). The proposal was accepted and we (Oosterbaan and Diphooorn eds.) are currently in the process of submitting articles to the journal (3 SACRASEC team member will submit an article as part of this special issue).
- International online workshop "Sensory Ethnography and the Intersection of Security, Religion and Urban Space Workshop" (<https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/sensory-and-audiovisual-ethnography-workshop>) on 7-8 June, 2021. The invited speakers submitted a piece of their work (article, short video, blog, sound recording, etc.) that highlights how they engaged with sensory ethnography in their own research. The goal of this workshop was to demonstrate and explore new possibilities for the collection, interpretation and analysis of sensory and audiovisual data in the context of critical security research and research on religion and urban space. The workshop also allowed a gathering of feedback from guest speakers on the extended research proposals of the SACRASEC team members.
- International collaborative project Corona Governance in Urban Margins (<https://cgum.sites.uu.nl>). To monitor and analyze the ramifications of the pandemic on order and security in the cities of the SACRASEC research, we teamed up with other researchers at Utrecht University. We hosted a series of webinars on the situation and development in the cities of research and we invited local researchers to speak and converse about the challenges. The collaborative project included the SACRASEC researchers. The reports have also resulted in a number of blogs that will be the basis of an edited volume (Koonings and Oosterbaan eds.).

To get an idea of what researchers have encountered and produced in the field, please take a look at the outputs listed below:

- van Veen, Jolien. 2021. "Bandits, Victims of Sinners? Negotiating public security provision in Brazil." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2021/06/01/bandits-victims-or-sinners/>. Posted on 01-06-2021.
- Arrobi, Zaki; Krouwel, Lotje; van Veen, Jolien. 2021. "Sensing cities and (in)securities." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2021/08/09/sensing-cities-and-insecurities/>. Posted on 09-08-2021.
- Fuller, Andy; van Veen, Jolien. 2022. "Field Impressions." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2022/03/21/field-impressions-jolien-van-veen/>. Posted on 21-03-2022.
- Arrobi, Zaki. 2021. "Thugs and Covid Protocols in Jakarta." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2021/05/05/thugs-and-covid-protocols-in-jakarta/>. Posted on 05-05-2021.
- Ibrahim, Murtala. 2021. "Religion and Vigilantism in Jos." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2021/05/05/religion-and-vigilantism-in-jos/>. Posted on 05-05-2021.
- Fuller, Andy. 2021. "Jakarta in a Time of a Pandemic." <https://sacrasec.sites.uu.nl/2021/05/05/jakarta-in-a-time-of-a-pandemic/>. Posted on 05-05-2021.

Avances que van más allá del estado de la técnica e impacto potencial esperado (incluida la repercusión socioeconómica y las implicaciones sociales más amplias del proyecto hasta la fecha)



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