

Living Uncertainty: Routines and Improvisation

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We assume that permanent states of exceptions like civil wars or events like disasters do not necessarily create chaos and social disorder, but challenge daily routines and the ability to anticipate the future. By drawing on the phenomenological approach of everyday life (Schütz, Berger and Luckmann), we explore the relation of lived experiences, narratives and the creation/re-establishment of everyday practices in contexts of uncertainty.

In Northern Sudan the everyday became contested and substantially fragmented due to flooding after construction of a high dam on the fourth cataract of the Nile. Combining established practices and knowledge with the given situation of crises (of exception) through improvisation, people gradually and tentatively create a provisional daily routine. Eastern Congo has become the synonym of chronic instability and chaos, yet in the people's perception, seemingly extraordinary war-related events have turned normal. Everyday life is regained by means of routinization which can be grasped as a conscious way of taming the permanent state of exception.

Comparing moments or periods of existential crisis we address with the help of our case studies questions of continuity in uncertain context. In focusing on the struggle for everyday life concepts such as "*improvisation*" or "*routinization*" become useful tools to describe the ways people deal with crisis, assign meaning to their life worlds and anticipate the future.

