

Cracks and in-betweens: Investigating cultural, religious and health-related gaps between the secular and the sacred

This project's background is the observation that people, influenced by increased globalization and cultural and religious pluralism, create meaning in their lives by relating to a variety of religious and secular views and practices that are not necessarily consistent or compatible. Our project aims to describe and analyze these new multicultural and multireligious environments through the metaphors of "cracks" and "in-between". The cracks represent areas of vulnerability in the human experience/condition where cultural and religious diversity create barriers for the individual's quest for wholeness and belonging. The in-between metaphor aims at showing that these particular socio-cultural fields operate in-between the public discourses dominating immigration, the health sector, and the media. The spiritual and material striving towards health and wholeness occurs in our three socio-cultural fields, affording opportunities for comparative, theoretical and methodological development. The overall goal in the project is to analyze the social outcome of the human struggle to create and maintain discourses and practices which transgress the sacral-secular divide, and thereby launch a discussion as to how society can meet and respond to this struggle. The project has three work packages: 1) focuses on the cracks experienced by African and Asian migrants as they strive to create meaning and establish social relationships on a new territory, and we ask to what extent participation in Christian migrant congregations leads to civic participation in, or segregation from, Norwegian society at large. 2) searches to investigate how immigrants relate to the rift that occurs between the health concepts and beliefs of some migrant communities and the Western bio-medical health practices. 3) analyzes how people in crisis meet and are met by help providers in various arenas and how mediated categories and discourses influence the individual's search for wholeness and good health.