

Wintersemester 2025/2026

Dienstag 02. 12. 2025 | 16.15–17.45 Uhr | H6 (Geo I)

Anthropological research in urban Africa from the 1930s to the present day

Prof. Dr. Katja Werthmann (Universität Leipzig)

This lecture retraces anthropology's contribution to urban studies in Africa. Before the seminal works from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute on the South-Central African Copperbelt cities in the 1940s and 1950s, female South African anthropologists had already worked in "townships" in the 1930s. French anthropologists studied phenomena such as rural-urban migration in West Africa in the 1950s. The central topics of these earlier works keep recurring in anthropological studies of urban Africa up to today. They include the self-organization of livelihoods, dwellings and governance, and the significance of ethnicity and other forms of belonging. Recent research looks at the connection between middle classes and city-making. The lecture compares earlier and contemporary research approaches and briefly outlines a new project on "rurbanity".