global dis :connect

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Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect

Leila Kiknadze

How is Islamic religious authority reconfigured in the digital age?

The problem

For centuries, Sunni Islamic authority has been grounded in the institutional legitimacy of the ulama and established traditions of interpretation. Digital platforms have transformed this landscape by enabling new religious actors to gain visibility and influence beyond traditional structures. Authority is increasingly negotiated between scholarly expertise, digital participation and public recognition.

Core interest

This project examines how Islamic religious authority is produced and contested on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. It explores how new religious actors establish legitimacy beyond traditional structures of religious authority and how digital environments reshape practices of interpretation, leadership and religious knowledge.

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Digital platforms simultaneously connect and disconnect Muslim communities. They create transnational spaces of religious exchange and participation while weakening centralised forms of authority. The emergence of multiple competing voices reveals how digital connectivity can generate new forms of fragmentation in a global digital *ummah*.

Preliminary results

Digital media do not replace traditional Islamic authority but transform the conditions through which authority becomes legitimate. Religious influence increasingly depends on the interaction between theological knowledge, digital visibility, audience engagement and platform infrastructures.