



Lecture Series of the Department of Development Studies

Yazid Ben Hounet

(French National Center for Scientific Research)

Law and Property in Algeria: anthropological perspectives

Wednesday, 31 October 2018, 4.15-5.45 pm

Seminar room, IE, Department of African Studies
Spitalgasse 2, Courtyard 5, 1090 Vienna

Chair:

Imad Sayrafi

(Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna)

In spite of its privileged place on the African continent, in the Muslim world and in the Middle East and North Africa region, Algeria remains poorly known, and the works relating to contemporary Algerian society published outside of Algeria are rare. This book seeks to contribute to our understanding of Algerian society today, through its relationships to property and to law. Beyond this, the objective is to propose, in a comparative perspective proper to anthropology, new theoretical and methodological perspectives by which to apprehend the anthropology of law in a Muslim context. Algeria, as a post-colonial and post-Socialist State, whose population is overwhelmingly Muslim, proves to be a particularly interesting case to study.

In this presentation, I will focus on the example of land appropriation and the practice of law in a steppe region. The question of rural land use and tenure in Algeria remains an important issue because of the policies of dispossession, nationalization and socialization implemented from the colonial period right up the present day. Based on a case study in a steppe province of western Algeria, I will discuss the effects of the law governing access to agricultural land (loi d'accession à la propriété foncière or APFA) introduced in 1983 and suspended in 2008 in favor of a new policy. I will discuss the conflicts caused by the new law. The analysis provides an understanding of current operating rules and norms, perceptions and interpretations of the law in land disputes, the uses of the law, the role of law enforcement institutions (i.e. judicial and/or administrative institutions), and the role and position of the agents operating within these institutions.