Anthropology of the State, the law, bureaucracy and the police. With examples from West African and Germany

The anthropology of the state is the study, predominantly but not exclusively, by ethnographic methods, of public services ('bureaucracies') and their actors ('bureaucrats'). Bureaucracy is one of the most important 'traveling blueprints' that shape the contemporary world. Like other organizations, bureaucracies are marked by a tension of formal and informal rules. Since its foundational moment in the 1920s, the basic tenet of organization studies has been that organizations, including public ones, cannot be understood on the basis of officials charts and regulations alone. This gives ethnography, and an anthropological approach in general, its pre-eminent role in the study of the state, as ethnography is the only methodology by which informal practices can be accessed.

Through lectures and the discussion of selected readings, and based on empirical work done in West African and Germany, we will try to understand how anthropologists study the state and public bureaucracies (like the police), with an additional glimpse at the law.

Session 1: Anthropology of the state


Session 2: Street-Level bureaucracies


Session 3: State, bureaucracy and policing. An anthropological and historical perspective


Session 4: Bureaucrats as para-ethnologists


Session 5. States and bureaucracy in Africa. Anthropological perspectives

Session 6: **What is legal pluralism? With an example from West Africa**


Session 7: **Studying legal practices in Benin ethnographically**


Session 8: **How to study bureaucracies ethnographically**


**Evaluation**

A test ("paper") of four pages (15000 signs) that the student will upload to Moodle not later than three weeks after the end of the course.