

## Specific Research Topics

Within the four overarching research priorities, researchers in the Department have started tackling such challenging topics as:

- the paradoxes of *personal autonomy* in the context of present-day normative pluralism
- dilemmas and challenges linked to expertise and consultancy work
- the increasingly complex interaction between law and religion
- minority protection under state law: critical case studies
- the internal and external autonomy of minority populations
- transnationalism and international migration and their impact on property regimes
- state emergence, reproduction, and dissolution
- decision making processes involved in choosing from among different dispute resolution forums

The Institute also provides opportunities for visiting researchers and scholars who would like to work more closely with the Department. For more information on this as well as on the Department's activities and vacancies, please see the Department's website at [www.eth.mpg.de/2951631/departments\\_foibles](http://www.eth.mpg.de/2951631/departments_foibles).



## People

**Director:**

Marie-Claire Foblets

### Senior and Post-Doctoral Researchers:

Katayoun Alidadi, Hatem Elliesie, Imen Gallala-Arndt,  
Maria Sapignoli, Katrin Seidel, Bertram Turner

### Ph.D. Candidates:

Beate Backe, Jonathan Bernaerts, Harika Dauth, Judith Eggers,  
Lucia Facchini, Markus Klank, Sirin Knecht, Kalindi Kokal,  
Annette Mehlhorn, Sajjad Safaei

**Senior Scientific Editor:**

Brian Donahoe

### Associates:

Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, Julie Billaud, Petra Burai,  
Ian Kalman, Luc Leboeuf, Ioan-Mihai Popa, Martin Ramstedt,  
André Thiemann, Larissa Vettters, Olaf Zenker

### Consultative Committee:

Markus Böckenförde, John R. Bowen, Jean-François Gaudreault-DesBiens, Anthony Good, Mark Goodale, Michele Graziadei, René Kuppe, Maleiha Malik, Werner Menski, Sally Engle Merry, David Nelken, Alison Dundes Renteln, Mathias Rohe, Ayelet Shachar, Christian Tietje, Nadjma Yassari, Vladimiro Zagrebelsky, Olaf Zenker

**Secretaries:**

Ute Gradmann, Kateřina Marenčáková



**Max Planck Institute  
for Social Anthropology**

Department  
'Law & Anthropology'



Cover photo: © Ralf Haustein

*Seiltänzer* by Winfried Totzek, Warendorf, Germany

© Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, June 2016



## Overview

Today's world is marked by an extraordinary proliferation of opportunities for people with different identities, affiliations, and allegiances – religious, linguistic, ethnic, regional, transnational, etc. – to meet and intermingle. This mix is irreversibly transforming societies into new complex entities. With this comes an increasing demand for a better apprehension of different normative orders at all levels of decision making.

The Department of Law & Anthropology aims to become a centre of excellence in the study of accommodating diversity in contemporary societies by combining the contributions of two disciplines: law (both at the theoretical level and in terms of legal practice) and anthropology (with its intrinsic concern for the culturally embedded nature of normative orderings), with the goal of coming to an empirically informed analysis of socio-legal processes.

With this approach, the Department commits its research agenda to a concept of law in society that takes account of both the social anthropological approach to normativity, broadly defined, and the rule- and precedent-based approach commonly adopted in jurisprudence and legal studies.

Through its activities, the Department strives systematically to involve anthropologists in actual legal practice and legal practitioners in the research, thinking and theorizing about concepts of justice and the accommodation of diversity in contemporary pluralistic societies.

## A Forum where Lawyers and Anthropologists Meet

The title of the Department reflects the aim of its research programme: to give equal weight to an anthropologically informed understanding of the diversity of normative orders and to the hands-on experience and concerns of legal practitioners who regularly confront the phenomenon of 'inter-normativity' – situations where different normative logics exist side by side and come into contact (and often conflict) with one another – and the resulting need for state legal orders to accommodate this diversity.

Productive collaboration between anthropologists and legal practitioners, however, requires that specialists from both disciplines confront their own epistemological and conceptual constraints. To date, legal anthropologists have mainly focused on the way individuals, groups and institutions engage with law. In doing so they have encountered, identified and analysed a variety of types of interaction between and among normative orders in a wide range of contexts. They have, however, tended to take legal practitioners for granted. Legal practitioners, for their part, tend to neglect the nuanced and complex array of competing normative orders and their interaction, choosing instead to focus on the rules enshrined in state legal orders (positive law).

## Research Priorities

The work of the Department is guided by the following four priorities:

- the accommodation of diversity in contemporary societies, with a particular interest in minority issues;
- awareness of 'human rights' and its manifold interpretations and potential contradictions in various settings;
- the integration of anthropological research and legal practice through dialogue between legal practitioners and culture experts in situations where law is faced with a diversity of normative orders and logics;
- the comparison and comparability of concepts, procedures, institutions, practices, etc., within and across normative orders.

