



CENTRO STUDI LUCA D'AGLIANO

Thirteenth Luca d'Agliano Lecture in Development Economics

RELIGION, POLITICS, AND DEVELOPMENT: IS ISLAM A SPECIAL ISSUE?

Jean-Philippe Platteau
Professor Emeritus
University of Namur

Friday, November 20th 2015
5.00 p.m.

Fondazione Luigi Einaudi
Palazzo d'Azeglio
Via Principe Amedeo, 34
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Jean-Philippe Platteau

Jean-Philippe Platteau is Professor Emeritus at the University of Namur (Belgium), and an active member of the Centre for Research in Economic Development (CRED) at the same university (Department of Economics). He is also an associate member of the New School of Economics, Moscow. He is presently the Academic Director of the Project on Gender and Development at the World Institute of Development Economics Research (WIDER) of the United Nations at Helsinki, and, together with François Bourguignon, he is the academic leader of the Project Economic Development and Institutions (EDI), financed by DFID, the British Agency for Development Cooperation.

Professor Platteau is the author of several books in Development Economics and he has widely published in leading academic journals. He has a book forthcoming at Cambridge University Press, entitled "*Is Islam a Special Problem? Exploring the Link Between Religion, Politics, and Development*".

His main research area is development economics and the economics of institutions. Most of his work has been concerned with the understanding of the role of institutions in economic development, and the processes of institutional change. The influence of non economic factors and other frontier issues at the interface between economics and sociology are a central focus of his work. Precise subjects are: the transformation of family structures, collective action problems in the management of village-level natural resources, informal insurance and micro-insurance programs, diffusion of technical progress, the impact of statutory laws and the role of customs, aid effectiveness, women's status under immigration, and the politics of religion.

Religion, Politics, and Development: Is Islam a Special Issue?

In 2002, the American Islamologue Bernard Lewis wrote a well-known book entitled "*What is Wrong with Islam?*". The answer provided in this book is that the problem with Islam is the historical merging between religion and politics since the times of its foundation. The implication is that politics is surrendered to religion, giving rise to sorts of permanent theocracies. In this talk, I wish to take the opposite standpoint, namely that in the lands of Islam, during normal circumstances it is religion that is submitted to politics rather than the other way round. It is only in times of state crisis that religion comes to the fore and tends to supersede politics. Because of a special institutional characteristic of Islam, the fact that it has never possessed a centralized church structure, interventions by the clerics may, or may not, improve upon the chaotic predicament born of a weak state. Special attention will be paid to concrete country examples, such as Iran, Pakistan, Algeria and Egypt. Moreover, I will attempt to precise not only the contrasts but also the similarities between Islam and Christianity.

Programme

Thirteenth Luca d'Agliano Lecture:

“Religion, Politics, and Development: Is Islam a Special Issue?”

JEAN-PHILIPPE PLATTEAU
Professor Emeritus
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17.00 Welcoming Address

PIERO GASTALDO (General Secretary,
Compagnia di San Paolo)

GIORGIO BARBA NAVARETTI (Scientific
Director, Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano; Professor
of Economics, University of Milan)

17.10 Introduction to the Lecture

FRANÇOIS BOURGUIGNON (Emeritus Chair,
Paris School of Economics; Chairman, Scientific
Advisory Board, Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano)

17.20 Lecture

18.20 Discussant

ALBERTO NEGRI (Il Sole 24 Ore)

18.30 Debate

The Luca d'Agliano Lectures in Development Economics

The Luca d'Agliano Lectures in Development Economics are organised every year in Turin thanks to the generous support of the Compagnia di San Paolo. They aim at favouring the diffusion of the ideas of the best world thinkers in the field to a non specialised audience. The ultimate objective of the Lectures is to help grounding the general debate on development issues, often confused and muddled, into sound economic analysis.

Past Luca d'Agliano Lecturers:

2003 - Pranab Bardhan (Professor of Economics, University of California, Berkeley): *"Globalisation and the Poor"*;

2004 - Dani Rodrik (Professor of International Political Economy, Harvard University): *"Rethinking Economic Growth in Developing Countries"*;

2006 - Jeffrey G. Williamson (Laird Bell Professor of Economics, Harvard University): *"Globalization and Underdevelopment in the Pre-Modern Third World"*;

2006 - François Bourguignon (Chief Economist and Senior Vice President, World Bank; Professor of Economics, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris): *"Employment and Development: Good Jobs, Bad Jobs"*;

2007 - Paul R. Krugman (Professor of Economics and International Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University): *"Does Outsourcing Change Everything?"*;

2008 - Anthony J. Venables (Professor of Economics, Oxford University; Director, Oxford Centre for the Analysis of Resource Rich Economies): *"Accelerating Economic Growth in Africa"*;

2009 - Barry Eichengreen (George C. Pardee and Helen N. Pardee Professor of Economics and Professor of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley): *"The Dollar in Doubt"*;

2010 - Nemat (Minouche) Shafik (Permanent Secretary, Department for International Development): *"The Future of Aid"*;

2011 - Thierry Verdier (Scientific Director, Paris School of Economics): *"The Role of Cultural Diversity in Growth and Development: What do Economists Have to Say about This?"*;

2012 - Timothy Besley (School Professor of Economics and Political Science, London School of Economics and Political Science): *"State Effectiveness and Economic Development"*;

2013 - Kevin H. O'Rourke (All Souls College, University of Oxford): *"Globalization and Industrialization in the Long Run"*;

2014 - Martin Ravallion (Edmond D. Villani Professor of Economics, Georgetown University): *"The Idea of Antipoverty Policy"*.

Luca d'Agliano

Luca d'Agliano was born in Turin on July 4th, 1961. In September 1980, he went up to Churchill College, University of Cambridge, where he read philosophy and then economics. On taking his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1983, he was awarded a scholarship by the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, Turin, and was admitted to St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford. Here, under the guidance of Amartya Sen, he studied questions relating to developing countries and welfare economics.

It was Luca's vision that the study of economics should be "... continually carried over into practical applications, above all when attempting to solve problems that limit the growth of man's well-being. For this substantially ideological reason, it becomes important to combine close study of purely theoretical matters with a study of the problems afflicting the developing countries in their struggle against poverty [...]".

Nearly a year later, Luca d'Agliano lost his life in a road accident (June 1984).

Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano

The Centro Studi Luca d'Agliano was founded in Turin in 1986 by the family of Luca d'Agliano, his friends, and some of his teachers. It is currently located at the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi in Torino and at the University of Milan. It is a non-profit research institution contributing original research in the field of international and development economics. Particular emphasis is placed on the training of young scholars and in giving them the opportunity of acquiring a truly international perspective. The activities of the Centro Studi mainly focus on academic research, but it also greatly contributes to the policy debate.

For information and replies

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For further information on Jean-Philippe Platteau and on the Lecture, please refer to:

www.dagliano.unimi.it