



ZMO-Kolloquium Winter Term 2013/2014

Fuelling Societies: Energy Resources and Politics 'From Below'

Thursday, January 30, 2014, 6 pm

Crude Power: Rethinking Oil and Politics - A Look at Iran

Lecture by Kaveh Ehsani

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

Oil-producing countries in the global South are most often characterized as suffering from a 'resource curse' or a 'paradox of plenty,' whereby the extraction and sale of a coveted natural resource on the global market directly or indirectly structures domestic politics and economics. This reification of oil as money (or as windfall 'rent') assumes that 'oil' produces a political and social sameness wherever it becomes a major component of a national economy.

This paper offers an alternative reading of the relationship between oil and politics by focusing on Iran's modern social history, and conceptualize oil not merely as income accruing to the state or multinationals, but as a socially produced commodity that is materialized through a labor process and a political economy of contested cultural and institutional processes that are historically and geographically specific.

Kaveh Ehsani is assistant professor of International Studies at DePaul University in Chicago. In 2013-2014 he has been a research fellow at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (IISH) collaborating on a project titled The social histories of labor in the Iranian oil industry. He is preparing a book titled "The Urban Life of Oil: Abadan and the Oil Complex in 20th Century Iran". He is a member of the editorial collectives of Middle East Report (Merip) in Washington DC and Goftogu (Dialogue) in Tehran.

His most recent publications include "Politics of Property" in The Rule of Law, Islam, and Constitutional Politics in Egypt and Iran, edited by Said Arjomand and Nathan Brown (2013, SUNY Press); "Authoritarian Rule and Development by Stages: Industrial Growth Poles, Development Planning, and their Social and Historical Footprint", Mehrnameh (October 2012) (in Persian); and "Oil Causes Neither Democracy nor Authoritarianism", Tarikh-e Irani (2011)(in Persian).

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