

Introduction

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The course is one of six courses organized around the Ph.D. programme on **Political and Cultural Institutions in Development** by International Development Studies at Roskilde University Centre during its first year from September 1990.

The course was planned by a group of researchers from Centre for Development Research in Copenhagen and International Development Studies at Roskilde University. The planning group consisting of Kirsten Westergaard, Ole Therkildsen, Neil Webster and Iben Nathan, CDR and Bodil Folke Frederiksen and Gunn Mickells, RUC, circulated the following background paper to lecturers before the course:

'The topic of the course is centrally related to current policies regarding institutional development as well as strategies for rural development in many developing countries. Thus, during the last decade a number of countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia have introduced and/or strengthened local government institutions, a policy most often referred to as decentralization of government. Parallel to this policy many governments in the Third World encourage activities by non-government institutions and often cooperate with such institutions in implementing its development strategies.

The students will be introduced to the relevant debates and literature concerning institutional development, public and development administration, participation, as well as the debates and literature on decentralization and democratization. The idea is to provide the students with tools which may enable them to analyse the performance of local governments and local institutions in terms of performance, viz. planning, implementation and administrative ca-

capacity, financial capacity, including resource mobilization, as well as fulfillment of development objectives.

The current debate concerning development strategies and institutional development relates to the control of central governments over development planning and administration and the competing theoretical approaches invoked. The debate concerns the degree of control, which powers should be delegated to sub-national institutions, to which territorial levels should power be delegated, which functions should be delegated, and how to devise institutional channels for development.

Decentralization is advocated as a means to achieve a variety of different objectives, and when introducing decentralization, governments seek to pursue specific political goals, including the promotion or discouragement of national and regional identities. A number of these will be presented and discussed. Further, the widespread lack of implementation of the declared decentralization policies will be discussed. What are the reasons for not implementing the decentralization policies as well as the different sectoral policies, ranging from agricultural policy, promotion of local industry and trade, tax policies, etc.?

In order to enable the participants to analyse phenomena like these, a number of theoretical models and explanations will be presented.

The overall premise underlying the course is that local government and local institutions cannot be analysed in isolation from a broader societal perspective. Therefore a number of social phenomena have to be analysed and discussed, including the historical context, the issue of nationalisms, the political system, the role of political parties and other interest groups, the political culture, the bureaucratic norms, and corruption.'

Kirsten Westergaard's introductory lecture gave an overview of ways of using the concepts of decentralization and participation in the thinking of different schools of researchers and practitioners in the development area, on the background of examples from West Bengal and Bangladesh. Marja Liisa Swantz debated discrepancies between proclaimed ideals of pro-people development in Tanzania versus the reality of directed development, on the basis of her long

experience of doing action oriented fieldwork in a particular area of the country.

Two papers dealt with Kenya. One by Bodil Folke Frederiksen was a study of colonial initiatives in the area of welfare and recreation in Nairobi. The Government's policies included some attempts to incorporate Africans in decentralised administration of locations. The other by John Lonsdale traced the 'deep history' of Kenyan political culture and concluded that 'Kenya's ... real struggles are not between one-party autocracy and multi-party democracy but between the moral ethnicity of individual self-mastery and the political tribalism of group competition'. Finally in his paper on 'Local Self Government and the Peasant Question in Bengal' Ranabir Samadar discussed the class basis and the limits of the local government *panchayats*.

