

Introduction

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"Institutions, Culture and Change at Local Community Level" was the second researcher training course to be organised as part of the Ph. D. programme on "Political and Cultural Institutions in Development", initiated in September 1990.

Networks of cooperation played a major part in the planning and preparing of the course. The three members of the organising committee, Fiona Wilson, Ebbe Poulsen and Preben Kaarsholm, represented one Danish networking institution each - the Copenhagen Centre for Development Research, the Department of Ethnography at the University of Aarhus, and International Development Studies, Roskilde University.

Lecturers and paper presenters at the course were drawn primarily from institutions with whom formal or informal links of cooperation had been established. Apart from those already mentioned the Copenhagen University Department of Anthropology (which was then still part of the Danish network), the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, between whom and Roskilde University a formal cooperation agreement had just been signed, the African Studies Centre at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the History Department of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, with whom International Development Studies cooperates within the framework of an ERASMUS programme on "African Studies - History and Social Science", and, finally, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, and St. Antony's College, Oxford, with whom less formalised links had been established through earlier exchanges of visits and guest lectures, not least visits to Denmark from Professors Shula Marks and Terence Ranger, who presented major lectures to the Sandbjerg course.

Similarly, networking institutions provided the course with the main part of its participants, the Danish network through research students from Copenhagen, Aarhus and Roskilde, and the Nordic

network represented by Ph. D. students from Oslo, Gothenburg, Helsinki and Uppsala.

The original outline of the agenda for the researcher training course was formulated as follows:

"The researcher training course will focus on institutions within a geographically or sociologically confined community, but will also take into account the forms in which international, national or regional institutions make their appearance on the local arena. The aim is to identify a specific level of analysis and to discuss methodologies and research approaches at this level which are central to development studies.

The course will be divided into 3 sections - "Holistic Models of Local Community Life", "Socio-Cultural Institutions: Socialisation, Identity and Popular Organisation" and "Local-Level Political Economies".

Within the first section, discussions will deal with approaches aimed at clarifying the complex patterns which in everyday life establish coherence in the self-understanding and action possibilities of social individuals. Among these are approaches which utilize and combine anthropological field studies, oral history, text-oriented investigations of popular culture as well as the classification of forms of political organization and mobilization within the community. Presentations will debate the uses of the concept of 'institution' within the various approaches and their significance for development research.

The second section on "Socio-Cultural Institutions: Socialisation, Identity and Popular Organisation" will introduce theories and methodologies related to the investigation of notions of adherence, identity and solidarity which move across boundaries of social difference. The discussion will take into account institutional relations based on kinship such as family patterns, gender relations, patron-client structures and clan-based hierarchies as well as other types of local community structuring based on relations between castes, notions of ethnic belonging, generational grouping and religious organisation. An important topic for debate will be the extent to which local institutions are influenced by changes emanating from other levels within society - how, for example, they respond to processes of general impoverishment, to alterations in economic conditions caused by national or international interventions such as

"structural adjustment", to changes in the efficiency of state regulation, to authoritarian or democratic political reforms, to educational initiatives or to the impact of foreign aid projects.

The third section on "Local-Level Political Economies" will deal more specifically with the forms of institution which mediate between culture and economic activity in rural communities. It has often been demonstrated how the development of capitalist relations of production and distribution undermine the solidarity patterns and institutional frameworks within village communities, but the emergence of a market economy may also lead to the development of new types of resources which strengthen local cultural institutions based on ethnicity, kinship or religion and make them undertake a changed social function. It will be discussed what forms of institutions are characteristic of different types of agricultural economies and what constitutes the connection between the institutional structure and economic activities. The cultural economy of local communities will be debated especially with a view to the access to and exploitation of land, water and other natural resources, the establishment of units of production, the division of labour between the sexes in the villages and within individual households, the structuring of local labour markets and the allocation of labour, the access to money and credit and to the accumulation of capital and its productive investment."

While this formulation provided a brief for lecturers and paper presenters, and most aspects of it were in fact touched upon in discussions, the actual course programme as implemented at Sandbjerg turned out somewhat differently and less neatly divided into sections. This had to do with the fact that some lecturers who had originally been invited (like Professor Partha Chatterjee from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Calcutta) had to cancel their participation, and others were not available for the full length of the course. Also, the lectures and papers offered would typically transgress the boundaries of the sections outlined in the original formulation, so that it would be a futile and dogmatic exercise to insist on upholding them in the structuring of the five-day programme.

The texts included in the present collection represent only a selection of the lectures and papers which were presented at Sandbjerg, but will provide the reader with a good idea of the way in which discussions developed.

Fiona Wilson's opening lecture, the text of which comes after this introduction, raises fundamental questions about how to interpret "locality", dissociates it from any necessary connection with "community", and discusses strategies "for a methodological way out of the micro/macro impasse." This lecture was followed at Sandbjerg by two presentations, the manuscripts of which have not been available for this publication - Terence Ranger's lecture on "Culture and Production in Southern Matabeleland" and Shula Marks' "Race, Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession" - both of which represented ways of avoiding the dualism that Wilson was warning against. Ranger's lecture focused on the role of cultural institutions and "symbolical resources" (a term he preferred to "tradition") in articulating and mediating ethnic, political and ecological conflict, while Shula Marks pointed to the history of a profession as an appropriate site for investigating the interaction between different types of social and cultural identification. Discussions following these lectures addressed further the relationship between historical and development research and the status of "methodology" in the progress of investigation and in the presentation of research results. Both Ranger and Marks were hesitant to talk about research methodology in the abstract and through their lectures tried to demonstrate how methods of both investigation and presentation must respond to the specific challenges of the material and problematic under research.

A second lecture by Shula Marks, which is included here, deals with "The Origins of Ethnic Violence in South Africa" and exemplifies how historical investigation may serve to demystify and deconstruct social categories such as "ethnicity" which have gained prominence through a process of struggle between competing levels of cultural and political identification. This discussion is taken further by Robert Papstein in his lecture, also included here, on the history of tribalism in Northwestern Zambia, and was continued in a lecture by Ebbe Poulsen, which we have not been able to include, on "Kinship and Exploitation". The planned contribution by Partha Chatterjee on "Nationalism and Communalism in India" unfortunately had to be cancelled, but was offered instead to a researcher training course held at Roskilde in January 1991. The text of it will be included in *Occasional Paper* no. 4.

The lectures by Johan Pottier and Phil Raikes, revised texts of which are reproduced here, debate ways of investigating the reproduction

of rural communities under economic and ecological stress and specifically address the usefulness of the concept of the "household". Pottier, in particular, also discusses the relationship between the methods of academic and consultancy, "rapid appraisal", research in an attempt to highlight what is characteristic of a respectable development studies approach. This debate was continued at Sandbjerg in a round-table discussion in which further participants were Ann-lisbet Arn, Mogens Buch-Hansen and Ebbe Poulsen, all of whom were able to talk on the basis of personal experience in conducting both academic and consultancy research. Implications of the discussion for the planning of the course participants' own research were debated further in a methodology workshop conducted later in the week by Robert Papstein and Fiona Wilson on the organisation of field work.

Finally, included in this collection is the paper presented by John Makumbe on "Economic Crisis and Administrative Incapacity in Zimbabwe". Written originally for a different context, the paper might at first seem to fall outside the thematic of a course on local institutions since it deals primarily with tensions and reorganisations within government and administration at state level. Nevertheless, important aspects of Makumbe's presentation concern possibilities and impossibilities of communication between state and local levels, and also, in a sense, the colonisation of the state level by more local interests as exemplified by the rise in corruption described in the paper, and the lecture therefore at Sandbjerg contributed productively to the general development of course discussions.

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