

The Association of Development Researchers in Denmark (FAU)

**Annual Conference 2010: 'Development that matters?
Religion, Livelihoods, Social Movements and Community Development'**

March 17-19, 2010 - Danhostel Gjerrild

Since 1990 FAU has hosted an annual conference with the primary aim of making a contribution to contemporary concerns through interdisciplinary debate. Thus it is our hope that also this year the conference will bring together Danish, Nordic and International researchers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds with development practitioners (from donor agencies, consultancies and NGOs) and advanced students in order to present and discuss important contemporary issues within Danish and international development research and shed light on important processes of development.

Social change takes place in developing countries as continuous processes in time and space. These changes are the outcome of a combination of (sometimes coming as a result of) state policies and international actors, (but more often as results of) as well as local level dynamics (on local level, between government, civil society and the private sector, and within civil society). The 2010 FAU conference aims to trace the various dynamics at the local level in bringing about social change. We need to understand the roles of different themes and actors (within) particularly within civil society in bringing about social change. The conference theme opens up for multi-faceted discussions of participation (social movements) and state policies seen from different actor's levels: Community based organisations, NGOs, faith-based or interest organisations, social movements, political parties, economic actors, government organisations, international donors etc.

The core themes of the conference lie within analysing the processes in society among different levels of action and understanding the power structures both on different levels and between levels in society. In this perspective social change and development could be regarded as 'demand driven' (from below) instead of driven by policies initiated by government and international (donor) organisations. And it invites to a discussion from many different disciplines and geographical areas - addressing 'development that matters'.

Four workshops are being planned - also inviting interested parties whether from academia or practice to join and contribute (the preliminary descriptions are found below. Contact the workshop convenors, if you are interested in contributing).

Workshop 1: Religion, communities and social change. For decades, religion was effectively ignored in research on local development, in part due to secularist biases in conceptualising development and essentialist conceptions of religion as inherently conservative and therefore irrelevant to development. But religious organizations, institutions, values, ideas and practices are a very real part of the social world in which social change take place, and as such, their inclusion is an indisputable step towards a broader and more empirically based understanding of processes of local development. The workshop intends to explore, among others, different aspects of the relationship between religion and local development, asking questions as to how, when, where, under what circumstances and in what ways religious institutions, organizations, values, ideas and practices play a role in processes of development and social change.

Workshop convenor: Marie Juul Petersen, Department of Sociology of Religion, University of Copenhagen (mariejuul@hum.ku.dk)

Workshop 2: Livelihood, Food and Nutrition. A key issue in reducing poverty and seeking to obtaining sustainable livelihood is food. All too many people in particular in rural areas in developing countries experience daily insecurities with regard to daily food supplies. Many attempts to address this have failed in the sense that little change has occurred and presently it is yet highly unsure if the MDGs will be fulfilled. However, addressing food insecurity is not only about increasing the amount of food produced and/or consumed, but also food with the correct nutritional content. Quantity can't replace quality. The challenges are related to the many actors involved whether be the local population, agricultural extension officers, providers of seeds and inputs, traders, local government, health workers (governmental and NGO).

Workshop convenor: Irene Nørlund, Suhr's Metropolitan University College of Copenhagen (IRNL@suhrs.dk)

Workshop 3: Local Organisations, Livelihood and Social Change: Local organisations in the shape of community-based organisations are often perceived by donors and governments as both effective and egalitarian media for organising development at the micro-level, particularly as regards access to resources and opportunities. These organisations have been accommodated within the broad, but

fuzzy sphere of decentralisation. Local organisations in the shape of social movements, on the other hand, are often opposed to state and local government, as they struggle against state policies. Regardless of scope and purpose, analysis of local organisations tends to be characterised by the use of notions of ‘community’, ‘cooperation’, ‘collective action’, ‘sustainability’, ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’. But who are the stakeholders at local level, and how are different interests articulated? What about representation – whose interests are represented in community based organisations? How effective are local organisations in terms of livelihood improvement? How democratic are they? Can social processes at the local level exclude the state and administration levels? To what extent do state policies and the surrounding economy influence local processes? This workshop invites papers that address very different topics and processes with the local level as the point of departure.

Workshop convenors: Vibeke Andersson, Department of International Studies, Aalborg University (van@ihis.aau.dk) and Torsten Rødel Berg, Department of International Studies, Aalborg University (torsten.r.berg@gmail.com)

Workshop 4: Community entrepreneurship and local economic development. With high levels of poverty persisting in many parts of the globe, local economic development has (yet) be able to bring about change in the situation of many poor people and their communities. While models of local economic development is being tried out, lately certain elements like micro credit and micro finance have been highlighted as the magic keys. Often also local or here 'community' entrepreneurs have been viewed as actors who could develop successful enterprises that would bring jobs and income to the communities. While the entrepreneurs do, they are facing different market challenges (lack of input, finance and tough competition - more and more often from international chains). And many questions remain unanswered (individual entrepreneurial capacities versus community (common) efforts, including the role of local government and civil society organisations), how to instill change in environments that are reluctant to change, and how to secure that local earnings remain at the local level, become (re-)invested and contribute to potential growth.

Workshop convenor: Søren Jeppesen, Centre for Business and Development Studies, Copenhagen Business School (sj.ikl@cbs.dk)

You can obtain further information from FAU, either by contacting the Chairman of FAU Søren Jeppesen, CBS at sj.ikl@cbs.dk or the FAU secretariat, Steffen Randahl at fau@diis.dk