

says about the possible consequences for the patterns of local leadership in Java after the demise of the current regime? Most of the contributors try to link their (at times necessarily) historical discussions to the present context of democratisation and decentralisation in Indonesia. Both issues will in one way or the other play an important role in future political developments not only in Java but in Indonesia as a whole.

The volume offers a wide range of perspectives not only on categories such as aristocratic, traditional, religious, and official leadership, as the editors indicate in their introduction. The economic, ideological and political implications are likewise treated in these articles. Both Antlöv's case study and the collective volume present valuable contributions to our historical understanding of Javanese political culture, but equally important, to our perception of current developments within Javanese and Indonesian society.

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OTTO HOSPES, *People that Count. Changing Savings and Credit Practices in Ambon, Indonesia*. (CERES Series 3). Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers, 1996. XVII, 281 pages, 24 tab., 10 photogr., \$ 30.00. ISBN 90-5485-503-7

(The book can only be ordered from the author: Dr. Otto Hospes,, Dpt. of Agrarian Law, Wageningen Agricultural University, POB 8130, NL-6700 EW Wageningen)

*People that Count* is a cumulative dissertation print of five already published articles and two additional chapters. It analyses the landscape of informal financial institutions in the village of Teluhu, Ambon (Indonesia). The book starts with a description of the reductionistic perspective of traditional contributions to development finance which emphasise institutionalisation of financial services. Typical discussions centre around cheap credit, easy money, viable institutions and the like. They neglect the 'multiple contexts' of transactions of individuals and institutions, the embeddedness of these in social relations and institutions such as kinship, neighbourhood, the normative-cognitive and authority structures, etc.

Otto Hospes, who has been inspired by Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, rejects such a reductionistic view. He prefers an actor-structure perspective, the central idea of which is that 'human action and structure presuppose each other: structures enable and constrain human action whereas human action sustains and changes structures' (p. 7). People are 'knowledge-

able actors' with 'transformative capacities' of social relationships and agency. Since people cannot anticipate all potential outcomes of their action and since intuition influences action, results are often unintended.

Taking this perspective on rural finance, Hospes argues that (1) it is misleading to think that financial technology development is based on objective criteria. It reproduces normative-cognitive and power structures; (2) human beings cultivate and combine knowledge systems about various domains of social life; (3) structures and systems affect savings and credit transactions (the latter are embedded in the former).

Ambon island, Central Moluccas, experienced an economic and social transformation during the last twenty-five years. The agro-ecological conditions are a unique combination of cash crop and subsistence agriculture, cloves and sago. The particular conditions of harvesting of these crops provide the framework for savings and credit arrangements. For example, the harvest of sago can take place every day of the year and provides a minimum of food security, while clove harvesting occurs every three to four years only. The harvesting requires the organisation of *ad hoc* forms of co-operation, which in turn may provide the basis for indigenous savings and credit institutions. On the other hand, the intrusion of money in everyday life has affected these forms of mutual help. Also, the ethnic origin of the people (Ambonese, Chinese, Javanese, Sumatran and Butonese) influences their occupational background as well as their savings and lending practices.

Chapter 2 links these particular agro-ecological conditions to the savings strategies, credit transactions and protections against risk. Such a view has so far largely been neglected in rural finance. Otto Hospes develops an integrated approach to development finance: relating agro-ecological conditions to the legal, institutional, social and economic contexts without too many generalisations.

Chapter 3 takes a closer look at the processes of monetisation and commoditisation. It links the different ways of getting and using money to different and changing social relations. These are becoming more and more complex. The author demonstrates that the meaning of saving, borrowing and lending depends very much on the type of relationship and transaction in which saving, borrowing and/or lending takes place.

Chapter 4 outlines different forms of mutual finance on the village level. Otto Hospes argues that informal finance, contrary to the planners' point of view, is very dynamic. He suggests that such forms of small-scale credit, which are characterised by a high viability should be transplanted to formal financial programs to increase their efficiency. Unfortunately scholars who emphasise the importance of institution building in rural finance, neglect

these indigenous forms which are often adapted to the environment. Therefore the author rightly argues that informal financial systems cannot be defined in terms of technology or services only, but have to include social aspects, because financial systems are social systems.

Chapters 5 and 6 take a close look at mutual finance. The euphoria of financial experts towards rotating savings and credit associations is criticized. According to Otto Hospes it is not the self-regulative, savings and organisational aspect that is usually celebrated but the mechanism to raise rural savings. Rotating savings and credit associations should therefore be considered as products and producers of different time-spatial processes of social transformation. They are flexible organisations which adapt to changing circumstances and reproduce social relations. A similar view is taken on cooperatives in chapter 7. They are historically usually linked to governments and their low-price policy. Hospes claims that cooperatives should be transformed into institutions that serve the needs of the farmers. As exemplified by a cooperative from the Moluccas chapter 8 shows that the neglect of the agro-environmental context has led to a failure in planning the marketing of clove harvests. Furthermore, it becomes obvious that the perception of the local people towards cooperatives is ambivalent, because they are closely connected to the government. For this reason farmers still continue to maintain their relations to local moneylenders. The last chapter relates the changes of credit relations to changing conditions of clove marketing. Due to improved transport and money circulation the tradition whereby traders and shopkeepers provided credit against the security of the harvest has been eroded. Nowadays credit is largely used to sustain working relations.

The strength of the book is the constructive-critical view on planning agencies from the point of view of a social scientist who has conducted long-term field research. *People that Count* is a sideswipe at planners who investigate flows of money but often neglect the people involved in these flows, their perspectives and perceptions. The rich material provides a vivid picture of financial transactions in the everyday life of the Ambonese. Particularly the introduction, the more theoretical part of the book, makes very interesting reading.

The main weakness is the cumulative form of the publication. The problem is that many detailed descriptions of the research area are repeated in several chapters. A re-writing of these passages and shortening of single chapters would have produced a more balanced monograph.

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