

Report – PhD-Course “Critical Perspectives on NGOs in development” at the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Oslo.

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1. Which course did you attend?

In August 2017 I attended a PhD-Course organized by the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Oslo. The Course was called “Critical Perspectives on NGOs in development” and was held August 16-18 in Oslo.

2. What was the course about?

As the title indicates, the course dealt with the role of NGOs and civil society in development and aid. The highly qualified lecturers addressed questions such as the role of NGO-actors in communicating local realities to those in power, in representing civil society, or as sub-contractors to donors. Also power relations in the NGO sector, resource distribution and wider implications of the increased influence, proliferation and professionalization of the NGOs were also discussed. All participants had written a 10-page draft paper before the course. During the course we had group sessions for feedback and advice on the papers.

3. How will you benefit from this course?

The course provided me with a thorough introduction and overview of the literature on the role of NGOs in development chains. I am about to start my fieldwork period on a research project that aims to investigate the socio-political dimensions of access to safe abortion and fertility control in Zambia. International NGOs play an important role both as service provider and as advocacy network. The course has enabled me to understand how these NGOs fit into a larger network and has also given me some analytical tools with which to understand their activities. During the course I also got to know other PhD-candidates working on similar issues, and some of them provided me with good advice on literature to explore or other researchers to contact. I was also able to establish contact with one of the international lecturers who has given me valuable input on my planned research.

4. How satisfied are you with the course?

I am very satisfied with the course. The days were long and intense, but there was also plenty of time to get to know the other course participants. I would recommend the course to other PhD-candidates with relevant research topics.