

"Where Is the Village?" Local Perceptions and Development Approaches in Kunduz Province

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Summary

Based on research in Kunduz, a province in northeast Afghanistan, this paper argues that the 'Western' notion of a 'village' cannot be automatically applied to local contexts in other regions of the world. The perception that villages are the only type of rural settlement that exists is a very modern one. It reflects the fact that a state apparatus has achieved the penetration, ordering and categorisation of its territory on a micro level. This is not a mere truism if we take a look at the apparent difficulties which development organisations, government agencies and national elites that are used to thinking in biased administrative terms face when they implement local-level projects in rural areas.

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1 Introduction²

In discourses among academics, policy-makers and practitioners, the 'village' is often associated with 'backwardness', 'tradition' or 'conservative attitudes' (Dewey 1972). These stereotypes of the 'village' ignore the fact that until the advent of colonialism and modern statehood in many places of the world, rural areas were characterised by a high variety of fluctuating and overlapping terms and denominations

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