

# Obituary

John Degnbol-Martinussen  
Professor, International Development Studies, Roskilde University  
22 June 1947 - 23 September 2002

John Degnbol-Martinussen helped to shape Denmark's progressive development policy, and development studies for more than two decades. A talent for rigorous political analysis was evident in his path breaking work on the nature of the peripheral state in India and Pakistan, undertaken as doctoral research at the University of Aarhus, where he studied from the late 1960s. It was at Aarhus that he held his first academic posts, from 1974-1981, but at the age of only 34, he was appointed to a Chair in Development Economics and Political Science at Roskilde University. At the time of his death, John served as the Director of the Graduate Research School in the same institution.

In the 1980s, Martinussen was President of a large NGO that placed thousands of volunteers in developing countries (MS - Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke, the Danish Association for International Co-operation). His government positions included the chairmanship of the Danish Council for Development Cooperation, and he served three years as chair of the Danish Social Science Research Council. Until 1999 he was also a member of the Executive Council of the European Science Foundation, and advised UN organizations on many occasions, particularly UNDP and UNIDO.

John has over 130 academic publications to his name, including five major self-authored books in English and eight in Danish. As his administrative duties mounted, so did his academic output. While his approach was rooted in political economy, he incorporated neo-classical theories of trade and investment, and the 'new institutionalism' in innovative ways. An early interest in transnational corporations in India led to the publication of his *Transnational Corporations in a Developing Country* (1988). This was followed by *Democracy, Competition and Choice* (1995) which was a critical examination of local government in Nepal, while his *Society, State and Market: a guide to competing theories of development* (1997) received widespread acclaim as an accessible roadmap for students and practitioners – it has been published in at least six countries. *Policies, Institutions and*

*Industrial Development* (2001) summarizes two decades of research into India's industrial development experience, and *Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation* (coauthored with Poul Engberg-Pedersen, 2003) promises to have broad appeal at a time when development aid budgets are being questioned in Denmark, as elsewhere.

Blessed with an ability to think, write, organize, network, and see things through, John Degnbol-Martinussen was able to combine inspiring research with organizational and political work. The Danish, Nordic and the international development scene has lost one of its most visionary thinkers and practitioners, and many others will grieve the premature loss of a friend and colleague.

