

Public Policy and Local Development: Bengkulu 1875-1975

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Abstract

Public policies in the field of economic development and public administration, are usually initiated at the national level and formulated in rather general terms, without detailed specification of the way they should be implemented in specific contexts, nor which specific processes are supposed to bring out the expected results. These public policies are intended to create an overall framework enabling and stimulating social and economic development, for instance increase of the average per capita income, poverty alleviation, employment generation, infrastructure development.

What processes actually make these policies successful or unsuccessful at the local level, is usually not well understood on beforehand. Historical experiences may provide some ideas about the interaction between public policies on the national level and communal or private responses at the local level.

The public policies in the field of economic development and public administration launched by the Dutch authorities after the abolishment in 1870 of the so-called "Culture System" represent an interesting case for the analysis of today's economic and social development problems. The policies initiated by the Dutch at that time provoked at the local level a variety of very specific responses which were largely unanticipated and quite unintended. By and large, however, they were beneficial to the economic welfare and wellbeing of a large section of the local population.

A number of favourable circumstances played a crucial role in the process. Nowadays they do not exist anymore, and cannot be accounted upon anymore. New approaches are to be developed based on quite different analytical perspectives.