Award of the Ester Boserup Prizes

June 12th 2015, 13.00-15.30
University of Copenhagen, Bülowsvæj 17

The Ester Boserup Prize is awarded by The Copenhagen Centre for Development Research for outstanding social science research on development and economic history. The prize is awarded to a scholar whose research has improved and deepened our knowledge of development dynamics and economic history, of poverty and wealth, of marginalization and political participation, and of lawlessness and justice.

This year’s recipient is Professor Susan Reynolds Whyte.

Susan Whyte is an anthropologist concerned with societal and family efforts to secure well-being under conditions of adversity. She has carried out research in East Africa on changing life conditions, family organization and post-conflict recovery. She has been highly productive in many aspects of the anthropology of health, publishing high-impact books, edited volumes and journal articles. Her work has dealt with health care systems as well as people living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and disabilities. Her most significant works include Disability and Culture (co-edited, 1995), Questioning Misfortune (1997), Social Lives of Medicines (co-authored, 2002), Generations in Africa (co-edited 2008), and lately Second Chances (2014), which is an example of collective ethnography. She had an early interest in gender issues and co-authored the 1987 evaluation report Women in DANIDA-supported Development Projects, which marked the start of sustained DANIDA interest in women in development.
The Ester Boserup Thesis Prize will be awarded for the first time in 2015. It will be awarded to Steven L. B. Jensen for his PhD-dissertation, Negotiating Universality: The Making of International Human Rights, 1945-1993. The PhD Review Committee praised it for being “written with verve and passion… and [for being] an impressive contribution to international historical scholarship on the evolution of international human rights norms”. In a work based on archival research in 10 countries, Jensen fundamentally re-interprets the history of international human rights in the post-1945 era by documenting how pivotal the Global South was in the breakthrough of human rights in the transformative aftermath of decolonization in the 1960s. This challenges us to rethink just how western the notion of human rights actually is. Jensen’s dissertation is groundbreaking in that it focuses on a core group of states that were leaders in the human rights breakthrough: Jamaica, Liberia, Ghana, the Philippines and Costa Rica. Steven L. B. Jensen is Researcher (Post. Doc) at The Danish Institute for Human Rights where he works on a new history of economic and social rights.