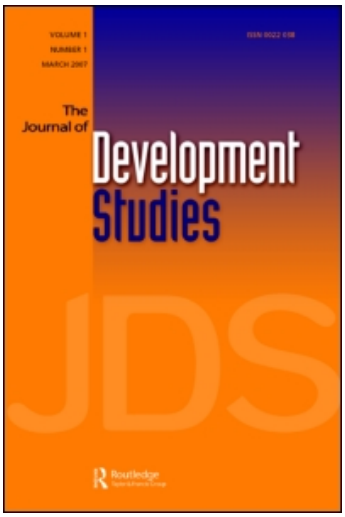

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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Social Security for the Excluded Majority: Case Studies of Developing Countries. Edited by Wouter van Ginneken. *Geneva: ILO*, 1999. Pp. xviii + 198. £11.95. ISBN 92 2 110856 2

This International Labour Office publication opens with the observation that less than half of the world's population enjoys any state-provided social security: in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia, the figure falls to between five per cent and ten per cent. In this light, the editor's introduction lays out the goals of the book: to explore why coverage is so low, and to provide experience-based insights into ways that coverage, and the value of the benefits provided, may be improved.

Social security (or, to use a phrase currently favoured, 'social protection') is defined as collective arrangements which protect people from a decline in living standards during crises (for example, illness or periods of unemployment) and/or provide assistance to those (such as, the disabled or the very old without kin) who, in the absence of such entitlements, are likely to fall permanently below what is considered an acceptable standard of living. Low statutory social security coverage occurs primarily because prevailing models of social and health insurance require a share of income and a regular pattern of contribution which are simply not feasible for the poor in the informal sector, whose wages are low and variable. Mistrust of government systems reinforces reluctance to contribute to statutory insurance schemes, particularly when the benefits provided (for example, unemployment benefits) fail to match the priority needs of the informal sector poor (smoother and more effective health expenditure, survivor and disability benefits, and so on). Broad coverage requires levels of financial and human resources which many states lack, while the fragmentation of responsibility for different aspects of social security between different government agencies contributes to patchy coverage.

The next six chapters provide case study material. Chapter 5 on health insurance for the informal sector in Tanzania (Kiwara) is the most specialised. The other five, structured along similar but not identical lines, examine how coverage has been improved in India, China, Tanzania, El Salvador and Benin, through the reformulation of state systems and the promotion of non-state, employment- or area-based collective arrangements. What emerges is the importance of national context – particularly regarding the definition of relationships between state, market and civil society – when attempting to understand and address patterns of exclusion. Thus the chapters by Gauthé on Benin, Kamuzora on Tanzania and Joshi on India highlight the diverse roles played by traditional community organisations and NGOs in filling some of the gaps in the often complex tapestry of statutory schemes. In China, by contrast, NGOs play only a minor role: one of the main challenges here, as described by Xiaoyi Hu *et al.*, is to encourage employees and non-state employers to assume a realistic share of the burden of social and health insurance. The interesting successes derived in urban areas of China (see pages 71–4 on multi-stranded health insurance) contrast with the much more muted results in rural areas. Pension reform, a major issue in middle income economies and a preoccupation of Latin American politics over the last decade, is one of the issues explored in the chapter by de Solórzano and Ramírez on El Salvador.

The final chapter provides policy recommendations, written mainly with low-income countries in mind, and discusses the potential contributions of different partners, including

the ILO itself. It is argued that statutory social insurance coverage could perhaps be doubled (for example, from 10 per cent to 20 per cent) by addressing administrative bottlenecks, legal restrictions on membership, and inappropriate benefit and contribution structures. At the other end of the scale the poorest – perhaps 30 per cent of the population – can only be reached by social assistance (broadly defined). Between these two groups is to be found around half the population, which has some capacity for and interest in contributing to insurance schemes, but will only be able to do so under arrangements quite radically different from those of statutory programmes. This, largest group, it is argued, should be the first priority for policy-makers seeking to improve social security provision, followed by cost-effective social assistance to the poorest.

The book could perhaps benefit from doing more – or more explicitly – to address the difficulties involved in defining the boundaries of social security as a field, and to recognise the alternative visions of the role that social security plays in relationship to the broader goal of poverty reduction. Stating clearly that social security 'should not be confused with policies for the promotion of employment and social services' (p.5) has the advantage of conferring a clear demarcation between 'protectional' and 'promotional' poverty reduction activities. Yet at the same time others are consciously seeking to broaden the remit of social security and to emphasise its potential contribution to long-term growth and human development: or, as a contemporary strategy paper puts it, to re-define social security as a trampoline rather than a safety net.

This minor point aside, *Social Security for the Excluded Majority* gives an excellent overview of the challenges involved in extending social security to those who most need it, but who are presently excluded. For those with particular interest in India, China, Tanzania, El Salvador or Benin, Chapters 2 to 7 provide meticulous summaries of the current state of play and recommendations for future options in these countries. The opening and closing chapters by van Ginneken, meanwhile, constitute essential reading for the more general policy-oriented reader with an interest in contemporary social protection systems and how they might be improved. (They are also a relatively easy read – a major virtue in a field which draws upon several disciplines, and which encompasses technically challenging issues, particularly regarding social security financing.) As more attention is paid to risk and poverty dynamics (witness the importance attached to security in the drafting of the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/01*), *Social Security for the Excluded Majority* supplies valuable, empirically-rooted analysis and policy recommendations.

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Taiwan's Development Experience: Lessons on the Roles of Government and Market. By Erik Thorbecke and Henry Wan. *Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers*, 1999. Pp.x + 454. £97.50. ISBN 0 79 2385 136

This is a book of special value for the few laggard countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, yet to take off into rapid economic growth. It presents an immense amount of data, analysis, and insight into the complex processes that transform an economy from one dominated by agriculture to one dominated by manufacturing and services.

Of course, the book is of scholarly interest for the understanding it provides of the rapid development of Taiwan. The wealth of statistical data is welcome given low

availability due to Taiwan's lack of membership in the United Nations and exclusion from standard World Bank data sets. Taiwan is not only a strikingly successful case of development, but its strategy is eminently suitable to contemporary conditions and is unusually well documented in its national statistics.

The book is authored by 20 scholars, nine from American Institutions, seven from Taiwan institutions, and four from other developing countries. They bring a wide range of perspectives. The book explicitly does not represent a single point of view on the several issues of controversy with respect to Taiwan's development. Nevertheless, a large number of important conclusions are drawn from the work. The repetition that is inevitable in an eclectic book with many authors is not troublesome.

Most striking is how completely at variance the Taiwan strategy is with the development practice in the unsuccessful countries of sub-Saharan Africa and even more with the implicit strategy that now dominates foreign aid. Given the lessons from Taiwan, sub-Saharan Africa faces a bleak future indeed.

Several clear lessons jump out from the analysis. Development is a step by step process and efforts to 'leapfrog many rungs of that ladder have, more often than not, been unsuccessful' (p.7). Domestically generated productivity change leads to export opportunities and international competitiveness and not vice versa. 'The concept of trade led growth is wide of the mark' (p.113). Government has an important positive role in fomenting rapid growth. It is not just compensating for market failure, but playing a role in the construction of markets. Avoiding diminishing returns in the face of massive increase in capital stock requires large scale institutional development, and small scale industry plays an important role.

The following three lessons are somewhat more complex. First, macro economic reforms, including budget balancing, inflation reduction, freeing foreign exchange rates, and opening up to foreign capital were pursued actively, pragmatically, and steadily over a long period of time. There was no cold turkey of radical reform. Taiwan started in the late 1950s with the contemporary ills of macro distortions in an extreme state, including hyperinflation. There was continuous commitment to reform, but constantly modified by political exigencies. Rapid growth commenced while the reforms were in an early stage. Both the growth and the reforms continued for decades. Lesson: reforms are essential; a quick blood bath is not.

Second, agriculture was the centrepiece of the development effort and of United States foreign aid in the critical early stages following 1950. United States foreign aid was large and concentrated on infrastructure, particularly rural infrastructure, and agriculture. The latter included major inputs into a pro-active Joint Commission (US and Taiwan) on Rural Reconstruction (effectively a super ministry of agriculture.) What a contrast with the past ten years when US foreign aid has reduced its allocations to agriculture by 80 per cent (!) a record more extreme than but similar to that of other bilateral and multilateral donors.

It is particularly notable that getting agriculture moving generated an industrial structure that was small scale and widely dispersed geographically. That is because rising agricultural incomes generated the effective demand for such development. This was in sharp contrast to the industrialisation pattern in Korea with which Taiwan is commonly, but erroneously, grouped. I personally recall long discussions with then Vice President Teng-hui Lee and Governor of the central bank, Sam Hsieh, as to how Taiwan would compete with Korea in the face of rising real wage rates. In the event, Taiwan's small industries did just fine, as is documented in this book.

There is considerable controversy as to how large was Taiwan's increase in factor productivity. There is however full agreement that factor productivity in agriculture

increased more rapidly than for other sectors and was a major driving force in providing resources for rapid growth in the non-agricultural sector. At the margin, agriculture in low income countries is modern, based on technological improvement, and thus has scope to bring massive numbers of people into the modern world.

One other striking point about Taiwan's development is that throughout the period, up until 1975, agriculture provided large net outflows of resources to assist in development of other sectors. The mechanisms for those out-flows varied greatly over time. The last period of such out-flows occurred largely through manipulation of highly unfavourable rice fertiliser prices and transfers of farmer's savings through the financial system. Farmers had ample incentive to use fertiliser in these circumstances because of the favourable effect on input/output ratios of public research system generated technology. The low capital requirements, once the initial innovations were absorbed, and high marginal savings rates facilitated transfers through the banking system.

Third, employment grew rapidly, with urban unemployment never a problem and rural underemployment rapidly reduced. Consequently, income distribution became more egalitarian in the early stages of the economic transformation. This is a notable contrast with the African problem of rapidly growing urban slums. Taiwan's policy recognised that urban slums are fed by rural–urban income disparities and hence placed immense emphasis on raising rural incomes. The result was an orderly, and indeed rapid, transformation of the labour force from agricultural to non-agricultural. Taiwan reflected none of the current tendency to treat urban poverty symptoms without getting at the underlying problem.

Are there specifics in the Taiwan case that differ from what will work elsewhere? Yes, of course, and the book provides considerable perspective on them. But, the basics so ignored in Africa should not get lost in those differences.

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The Political Economy of Water Pricing Reforms. Edited by Ariel Dinar. *New York: Oxford University Press for the World Bank*, 2000. Pp.x + 405. £38. ISBN 0 19 521594 X

In many countries urbanisation, rising living standards and international learning effects are generating substantial increases in water demands. Increasing scarcity is then often exacerbated by both quality deterioration of existing supplies due to environmental neglect and, recently, the actuality and prospect of global warming. It is no wonder that water is held to be one of the most profound problems facing national and international policy-makers.

So far research and debate on the issue have not matched the quantitative and qualitative magnitudes of the supply–demand imbalance. This is despite the pleas of authors such as Riesner, Postel and Winpenny, and of bodies such as the OECD and now the EU, to treat water much more as an economic good while preserving its environmental and social dimensions. That treatment is best administered through a mixture of education, regulation and pricing, the optimal combination differing depending upon sector, culture, region and rights tradition. To make progress we need to know much more about experiences with all three approaches.

This edited book is about one of these approaches, bringing together 18

contributions on theory, applications and case studies of water pricing reform. It is based on papers presented at a World Bank-sponsored workshop on the Political Economy of Water Pricing Implementation in Washington, DC in November 1998. 'Political Economy' alludes to the fact that economic policy prescriptions have to take into account political considerations rather than the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century use of the term to mean the economic aspects of government.

Apart from an odd and rather lonely table of water prices, Dinar's own opening chapter gives a most helpful Cook's tour of the political, institutional, bargaining and transaction cost aspects of reform to be encountered in the following pages. In Part 1, section A, of four disparate theoretical underpinnings Bromley's offers most, proposing a formal model of the operation of an irrigation system as the optimal provision of a public good. The novel aspect is the context of a constitution that binds all farmers together in the management of water and system maintenance. Two of the accompanying chapters are directed at niche markets (collective choice theory and Californian Water District decisions), while Tsur's analysis, of pricing problems in the face of implementation costs and asymmetric information, gains credibility once we realise that it is meant to refer to irrigation alone (however, why do an agency's water pricing expenses increase in line with its revenues?).

Section B shifts attention towards empirical approaches to reforms. Renzetti offers a brief survey of the cost and demand structures lying behind the establishment of prices, of pricing rules and of the economic impacts of reforms; unsurprisingly, he stresses the importance of gathering information about all these *before* reforms are introduced. In the next two chapters the old world's newer methods confront the new world's older problems: an intertemporal general equilibrium model is applied to irrigated agriculture in Morocco, (once liberal trade reform and water rights markets are mixed in, a strong macro investment and growth response is predicted); and then Monte Carlo methods (MCS) are used in order to assess the risks of recent water rate-making policy in Dakar aimed at financial self-sufficiency (MCS adds 20 per cent to the 1997 price predicted by a deterministic model).

Chapters 9 to 13, embracing water pricing implementation, deal with increasing block tariffs from every possible angle. Boland and Whittington argue that IBTs produce 'inefficiency, inequity, complexity, lack of transparency, instability and forecasting difficulties', but cannot explain why they are of increasing popularity! (Perhaps these tariffs give water users an environmental message, which cannot be handled easily by orthodox economics?) Hewitt, too, expresses puzzlement that US utilities continue to switch to IBTs, but this can be traced to the odd assumption that all utilities can be analysed as profit-maximising firms.

Lined up against these critics are two 'participators'. Hall gives a fascinating insider account of the activities of the Los Angeles Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee over 1991–94, which kept its faith in two-tier marginal cost pricing and persuaded the city's Department of Water and Power to introduce it. And Strand, struggling with water rates in Tegucigalpa (Honduras) – charges equal to only 20 per cent of long-run marginal costs and halved in real terms in the last 20 years, excessive use by those who have access, and no funds to pay for access for the really poor – concludes that (i) rates need to rise but in line with pre-specified service improvements (ii) efficient marginal pricing can curb consumption and (iii) intramarginal consumption prices should be lowered to help build stakeholder consensus.

Somewhere in the middle is Van Humbeeck, describing the exciting 1997 Flanders reform whereby each household member is granted a free per capita allowance of $15m^3$ per year (41 litres per head per day) before paying a (now) higher volumetric rate

on all remaining consumption. He shows that lower-income households have actually been made worse off by this change, but this, it seems, is because the better-off in Flanders actually have a *lower* per capita use of piped water – caused by the economies of scale factor within larger households outweighing the higher income effect.

The country case studies also provide a rich variety of experiences. In Australia and Mexico national tariff reform has proceeded rapidly in the 1990s, triggered in the former by the successful Hunter District reforms of the 1980s. On the other hand, in Pakistan and the Yemen change is much slower, with institutions and traditions being accorded more respect. A 1997 Brazilian law has facilitated wide-ranging reforms, including bulk water pricing, but there is still no federal template for state and municipal tariff design.

Dinar concludes that reform gains need to be shared, reformers need to acknowledge the need for a set of institutions and the social objective function should *include* the power and transaction costs associated with reform implementation. Others may argue, however, that the very valuable material in this book points to the need to attempt to maximise economic and environmental efficiency *subject to* constraints on equity, revenue generation and institutional change. The differences between the two approaches may turn out to be crucial.

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Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees. Edited by Michael M. Cernea and Christopher McDowell. *Washington, DC: The World Bank*, 2000. Pp.xvi + 487. $25. ISBN 0 8213 4444 7

Risks and Reconstruction is a multidimensional analysis comparing groups displaced by development projects, and those fleeing conflict or natural disaster. With case studies from a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the geographical scope of the book is extensive. The theoretical framework is shaped by Cernea's chapter which introduces the impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) model. Cernea describes the present status of the IRR model in theory and practice, advocating that risks of impoverishment should be addressed explicitly and systematically in resettlement planning. He identifies incompleteness of risk analysis, over-reliance on cost-benefit analysis and a lack of consultation with displaced populations as the three chief flaws leading to an undertreatment of impoverishment risks.

The structure of the book is tight with authors addressing different aspects of the theory and practice of resettlement. The volume engages sensibly with the non-material dimensions of impoverishment and resettlement, with two strains of argument emerging: the first concerns forms of impoverishment which are not captured by mainstream assessments. Nayak draws attention to the impoverishment of morals and values intrinsic to identity which are lost during resettlement, claiming that the impact on mental health is virtually absent from analyses. He asserts that policies rely predominantly on quantifiable evidence, and that this may be an explanation for their failure. Reddy, with reference to India, and Fernandes with reference to the US, list other impacts of displacement associated with physical and mental well-being, and Fernandes concludes that psychological self-confidence should be taken into account alongside social and economic self-reliance.

The second strand of the argument questions the relationship between economic

and social or personal well-being when social indicators outstrip economic outcomes. Hirschon's example of the thriving communities in the urban settlement of Kokkinia in Greece, and Voutira and Harrell-Bond's of the strengthening of Tibetan identity in exile, suggest that resettlement should not be evaluated by economic criteria alone. Srensen's account of the endurance of the Eritrean identity in Sudan challenges the assumption that social disarticulation is a necessary part of the process of resettlement, and concludes 'rehabilitation is a social, not a technical, process' (p.201). Whilst resilience provides one means of protecting personal or group identities, Hakim's case of the Sardar Sarovar Dam project and Meikle and Zhu's work on China, demonstrate how dislocation demands flexibility and adaptation at an individual and community level during economic transition which accompanies resettlement.

There is some attention paid to the politics involved in dislocation and resettlement. Lassailly-Jacob sees the compensation available to resettlers as dependent on the reasons for displacement, and notes three spheres of influence: the settlers themselves, the planners and the host communities. Abutte similarly notices that the forced resettlement of rural Ethiopians following the famines of 1984 and 1985 was a tragedy for the resettlers, the host communities and the country as a whole. Koenig and Diarra claim that it is generally groups with distinct values and institutions which are displaced, and Fernandes, positing that most displacees are illiterate, highlights the importance of addressing factors which deprive people of the motivation to help themselves. This line of enquiry is not satisfactorily pursued; the IRR draws attention to the different aspects of impoverishment, but does not cast light on the political processes which lead to displacement, or the processes which render compensation inappropriate or inadequate.

Whilst there is clearly cognisance of the political dimension, the tenor of the book still couches displacement as a – possibly necessary or inevitable – by-product of construction or disaster. A conflict analysis would consider displacement as more than a neglect of human rights, and as a deliberate strategy intended to promote the interests of one group over those of another. Such an interpretation significantly changes the nature of the risks faced and the relationships between actors. Brown enumerates the considerations governing assisting people as being political, commercial, bureaucratic or arbitrary; the same can be said of the displacement itself. If this is to be taken seriously, the whole context of the cost-benefit analysis is undermined, and the policy and implementation environment, which purports to mitigate the detrimental impacts of displacement, is fundamentally altered.

The book would appeal to an academic audience and to some policy-makers concerned with the particular issue of resettlement, but is probably inaccessible to many others. Stylistically it leaves a lot to be desired; running to nearly 500 pages its size is off-putting, and the chapters generally make heavy reading. They tend to be long winded, with numerous anecdotal references many of which contribute little in terms of analysis, and the reader is left a little dazed by the whirlwind tour of disasters. It also sows the suspicion that the authors have latched on to a thesis and are thrashing around the globe for pieces of evidence to support it. The conclusions are largely unimpressive; they are brief, especially when compared to the weight of the chapters, and tend to be theoretically and analytically thin. They suffer most from deference to the ideological forces of the World Bank, the book's publisher, and Cernea, the editor. The point is well made that there are different dimensions to the planning process, and differing impacts on resettlers, but this is not overly surprising. Many chapters refer to others in the same volume, which

simulates debate, but in reality amounts to contributions being thrown into a pot with little progress or coherence. The editors do not provide a final chapter, and the book's ending is precipitous and inconclusive.

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On the Move: Mobility, Land Use and Livelihood Practices on the Central Plateau in Burkina Faso. By Mark Breusers. *Munster: LIT Verlag*, 2000. Pp.xv + 423. DM 79.80. ISBN 3 8258 3941 9

This book is about the livelihood practices of two population groups inhabiting the Central Plateau region of Burkina Faso in the semi-arid Sahel: the Moose (or Mossi) and Fulbe. Numerous studies of agriculture, ethnicity and society in the Sahel have studied these groups, but what is special here is the attempt to analyse and understand the place of mobility and migration in their livelihood strategies. The author charts the movement of these populations on a massive scale from the northern to southern and western regions of the country, and beyond to the Ivory Coast. This migratory process is then related to their land use systems and their adaptation to the variable Sahelian climate. This movement of ethnic groups, and their evolving relations with each other, is situated in the broader context of transnational migration streams, for example, refugee flows, tourism and people moving in search of work. The current policy significance of the study is thus undoubted – although the lengthy ethnographic text of over 400 pages, and the highly descriptive presentation of detailed case study information at times reduces its accessibility.

The central theme of the book is the interplay between changing land use practices and changing processes of geographic mobility. Semi-arid and arid regions have historically been characterised by the presence of extensive land use systems, pastoralism and agro-pastoralism: production systems designed to respond to the vagaries of climate (primarily, rainfall). Indeed, movement of a temporary or continuous nature to opportunistically take advantage of natural resources (pastures, water sources …) has been a constant critical feature of nomadic, semi-nomadic and transhumant herder livelihoods and production systems in the region. Significant population movements in the West African Sahel have been recorded in numerous texts – usually explained in relation to population growth and changing climate, war and slavery. Mobility and migration have thus been a central feature to livelihoods in the region.

This study fits with the increasing acceptance that most rural people in Africa employ multiple strategies to make up complex livelihoods. This awareness has gradually been incorporated in development co-operation thinking, which now overtly accepts the importance of complexity and diversity in livelihoods-oriented policies and approaches to rural development. However, despite the wealth of literature on these issues in the Sahel, policy makers still have difficulty in addressing mobility, migration and diversity in rural development interventions. It is here that this study has much to offer.

The book is structured around nine chapters. These begin with the description of the evolution of land use practices in a particular environmental and ecological setting over time, and move on to examine the relationship between physical or spatial realities and social structures (lineages, village territories, relations between

indigenous and non-indigenous rural dwellers). The critical link between geographic mobility and multiple livelihood strategies is highlighted and then linked to the evolution of fundamental social institutions such as family, marriage and kinship. A key issue raised relates to the variation in importance of continued kin relations and kinship-based institutions from actor to actor over the course of time – leading the author to emphasise the importance of situating analysis in specific contexts. An important analysis of the (negative) impact of colonial land settlement policies is accompanied by an overview of historically increasing Burkinabe migration towards the Ivory Coast since the 1960s – one of the dominant destinations for migrants in West Africa – and its relation with changes in social organisation. This is followed by chapters focusing on the relationship between migration and the increasing diversification of livelihood practices, on socio-cultural relations between the Fulbe and Moose, and on socio-economic differentiation.

During this analysis the author finds space to discuss the important issue of relations between farming and herding communities, and between the Fulbe and Moose as distinct ethnic groups. While his analysis could have nuanced further the different types and intensities of conflict, competition and complementarity between these groups, he does build on the literature on farmer–herder relations by arguing that policy should accept that relations between groups are diverse and evolving. Policy should then focus on sensitively reinforcing relations through strengthening their respective specialisations in agriculture and animal husbandry, whilst avoiding excessive stress on the promotion of mixed farming.

A key theme in the book is that of carrying capacity and degradation. The author argues that in the context of extensive land use systems and relatively high population densities for the region, movement of population is a natural result of current land use practices and over-exploitation of the natural resource base 'to such an extent that a depopulation becomes inevitable'. The transgression of carrying capacity disrupts the equilibrium between population and available resources, which is then regulated by drought, hunger and the movement of people. Given the controversy surrounding the conventional wisdom on carrying capacity, this is a question worthy of further debate.

The concluding chapter effectively draws out key conclusions on geographic mobility. The final section presents perhaps the most challenging notion: that approaches to development need to be 'de-territorialised', overtly accept the changing nature of social relations between population groups (for example, Fulbe and Moose), acknowledge the fact that land tenure arrangements are inherently dynamic, and that this dynamism has allowed development actors to develop diverse livelihood strategies in response to wider political, economic and environmental change.

The key messages that the reader is left with are not necessarily new, but they highlight once again the important lessons that arise from ethnographic studies of this kind: (1) the importance of taking an actor-oriented and context-based approach to the analysis of complex development situations; (2) the importance of understanding processes of change and fluidity in social relations and livelihood practices (for example, understanding the diversity of types of relations over time between Fulbe and Moose population groups); (3) the recognition that policy inserts itself into complex social settings and struggles, in which development interventions such as land reform or development programmes are embedded – and thus complexity of contexts, peoples and practices need to be understood in designing development interventions; (4) the need to 'de-territorialise development approaches'.

In summary, three main features recommend this book to students of rural development in the Sahel and policy-makers alike. First, the text is absorbingly

written, drawing the reader in to the fascinating depths of the complexity of livelihoods, and their relationship with wider processes in the Sahel. Second, the analysis draws on a sound analytical framework and a wealth of new empirical data to illuminate a range of vital issues concerning the interface between the environment, movement and migration, culture, ethnicity and livelihoods strategies. This is anchored in a clearly defined context: that of the Moose and Fulbe people of the Central Plateau region of Burkina Faso. Third, the author moves easily from the detailed analysis and description of context bound practices and experiences to the level of drawing concrete lessons from this for development interventions. If the time is taken to enter into the complex realities of the Sahel through this book, it will prove to be of use to students of the anthropology and sociology of development, as well as to development policy-makers seeking to design more informed development interventions.

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Urban Poverty in Africa: From Understanding to Alleviation. Edited by Sue Jones and Nici Nelson. *London: Intermediate Technology Publications*, 1999. Pp.xiv + 193. £15.95. ISBN 1 85339 474 2

Time was, for a while at least, when no one wrote of 'poor' countries or towns. They were 'underdeveloped', sometimes 'developing', and expert expectation was that the people who lived in them soon would be, certainly *could* become as well off as the rest of us. 'The goal was to eliminate Africa's "backwardness", not poverty' (p.5). Our economies were growing and our thinking was still evolutionary. We talked without embarrassment about 'progress', visualising it as an escalator up which societies moved, one behind the other maybe, but always and steadily further away from poverty. A jammed escalator could be fixed by more education, more efficient administration, more money – that is, with appropriate injections of aid, know-how and (let's not forget) goodwill, everybody would catch up.

Now, with post-progress hindsight, we can see it never did and never could happen quite like that. Now we know that the mechanisms are more complicated. The relation between poverty and betterment needs again to be taken apart, the connections re-examined, and a new blueprint attempted.

These are the objectives of the present collection. Sixteen papers by 23 authors bring as many perspectives and case materials to bear on problems of urban poverty in Africa. This range and the multidisciplinarity it encompasses are necessary, given the aims of the volume, and they are admirably well organised. The editors have subdivided the contributions into three parts: *strategic considerations* (Chapters 1–5); *institutional responses* (Chapters 6–11); and *livelihood strategies* (Chapters 12–16). The divisions are justified and their contents set out in a brief Introduction.

Parts II and III report ways of coping with – note: not curing – varieties of poverty as such. Indeed the exploration of its diversity, of definition and of fact, is a strong thread throughout the book. It is explicitly addressed in Part I, notably in Sue Jones's helpful overview (Chapter 2), and placed in the context of urban, as opposed to rural, Africa by Nici Nelson (Chapter 1) and David Booth *et al.* (Chapter 6). I am not sure that urban poverty should be distinguished by urban-ness as such; different kinds of

urban system provide contexts for it, which can be as different as town and country. But the choice is explicit, and it allows comparison of the peculiarly urban workings of the informal economy in cities, of efforts made by international bodies, governments and/or NGOs to control or enhance it, and of the unintended consequences of poverty alleviation policies – although much of the comparative effort is left to the reader. Similarly if the perspectives here put to use in Africa were also applied to poverty – *urban* poverty – elsewhere, our understanding of the essentials might be advanced. (Neither editors nor contributors, of course, are to blame for the unfortunate tradition of regional *apartheid* in analyses of this kind.)

In the last chapter Jo Beall *et al.* 'straddle' the rural–urban divide with the concept of 'livelihood systems' connecting town and country. The idea that livelihood is built on non-material as well as material resources recurs throughout the book. Its crucial significance is in the point that poverty, of whatever variety, is not 'just' about too little money. People and countries are poor for want of money *and* one or more other vital resources; money is necessary but never sufficient for alleviating poverty. Contributions in Part II demonstrate how far money-maximising strategies (like ESAP) or crude injections of cash (as in insensitive relief or aid programmes) may even make conditions worse – at least for some of the people some of the time; and case studies in Part III show how other-than-material shortages exacerbate the poverty of materially poor people.

Once the multiplicity of factors and contexts is allowed into the frame, prescriptions for alleviating, even for understanding poverty become impossible; despite the optimism of the sub-title, readers should not look for them here. Nonetheless, important insights emerge. One striking two-edged truth: ordinary people are resilient to conditions of material poverty that would defeat the privileged observer; and/but there are limits to their capacity for survival. Both are measures of resourcefulness as well as resource.

In some sense it is 'resources of the spirit' which make the difference. These are manifest in Part III, in accounts of individuals and groups coping with the poverties that oppress them. Slum-dwelling housewives, street children and isolated old women cannot be 'understood' in any other vein. Christine Obbo's AIDS narratives are especially moving. It is odd that AIDS is not referred to in other chapters: whether as effect or cause of urban poverty, surely the epidemic is implicated.

Which comes back to the change of mood with which I began. We cannot agree on a 'cause' for poverty as once we did for non-development. This is realistic, but it leaves the discourse untidy and assumptions unclear. For example, does 'government bias and inefficiency' (Chapter 3) follow from lack of government resources, or from corruption – or both? Different strategies for poverty alleviation follow.

The political agenda now driving 'betterment' is less explicit than the old. Demonstrating its multi-vocality, this book adds to the understanding of urban poverty, but also to the sense that alleviation cannot happen unless the many voices find a common language and the will to use it.

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Disappearing Peasantries? Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Edited by Deborah Bryceson, Cristóbal Kay and Jos Mooij. *London: Intermediate Technology Publications*, 2000. Pp.x + 333. £20. ISBN 1 85339 477 7

This is above all a useful book because it synthesises recent themes in the study of peasant societies. Those are dealt with in a general introductory and concluding chapter by Deborah Bryceson and in thematic chapters on the study of the peasantry in each of the three continents, each done by one of the three editors. Papers that are mostly empirical and specific in nature, situated on that continent, follow these continent-wide thematic chapters. The guiding theme in this reader is whether peasant societies are on the decline and whether these are marginalised as global forces of capitalism spread over the world. This de-peasantisation is then linked to de-agrarianisation: increasing diversification of income in rural societies.

Deborah Bryceson opens the book by quoting Theodor Shanin in 1966: at that time – the Vietnam war – peasant influence seemed then to shake the foundations of the citadels of power. The present perception is different, hence the question mark in the title. There is far less certitude when discussing peasant society. Deborah Bryceson sums that up well: 'One could argue that peasants are now more elusive than before … Their relationship to the soil is changed. Multi-occupational, straddling urban and rural residences, flooding labour markets, peasants become definitionally problematic' (p.30). The main introductory chapters have the character of a state of the art and lead therefore to further reading. The annotation is therefore especially useful. For example: Jos Mooij gives references to Lipton, Byres, Scott and Brass on the question whether the peasantry as a class is differentiated and how it relates to other classes in India (p.218). Cristóbal Kay's article shows that the debate on depeasantisation is much older in Latin America. There is even a special term for proponents of this view: *descampesinistas.* He represents this debate lucidly in a note (p.136). Those notes can make light work of preparing a lecture

The theoretical perspective in this volume is non-dogmatic, inspired by Marxism, and will be familiar to those who read *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. Many of the papers try from this perspective to come to terms with the rise of neo-liberalism since the late 1970s. This theoretical perspective is also a constraint because the danger lurks of a mechanistic interpretation where impersonal big forces reign. It was for me a relief to come to John Knight's paper on the migration of urban Japanese to depopulating rural areas: Japan's new peasants. Knight starts with placing nature and farming within a complex of common cultural constructs in Japan and such an approach brings in a humanity that threatens to get lost in many of the other papers. Cultural constructs leave room for meaning given by actors in social interaction. It is thus not suprising, but mistaken, that Debbie Bryceson in her introduction writes about actor oriented analyses that: 'the historical significance and class dimension of peasants' existence is often disregarded in this approach' (p.29). In fact, historical significance can get lost in Marxist inspired analysis as well as it can stultify historical patterns where the unusual or the exceptional may give more insight.

Two contributions on Latin America mention historical facts that may illuminate more than the general statements offered. Carmen Deere sees developmental patterns in denationalisation almost as ordained in the early establishment of the sugar industry in Cuba. However she mentions in passing counter-revolutionary activity in the Escambray mountains (p.142). A description of who was counter-revolutionary and what reasons they gave for revolt is missing. It may have been a marginal movement in Cuba's recent history, but it would give insight in different interpretations and

reactions to historical situations. Luis Llambi writes on a high valley in the Venezuelan Andes, where immigration of Canary Islanders brought knowledge on how to use irrigation for horticulture. This is merely mentioned without elaboration. The question seems pertinent as to how Canary Islanders appear in an Andes valley in Venezuela (p.184). I missed there an analysis of the chain of social contacts that brought the Canary Islanders there or the way in which their entrepreneurial behaviour was embedded in cultural beliefs. Llambi is concerned with the explanation of varieties of outcome of structural adjustment. I do not think that is possible without attention for the way actors – who may have similar class positions – interpret social life in different ways.

I have singled out these two articles because they mention extremely interesting matters: an opposition movement in Castro's Cuba and a spectacular migration. There is thus much gained in reading this book, but my reactions are ambiguous. It made me aware how much I value detailed ethnographic case study research and expect more from such research to answer the question in this title than this book gives. I fail, however, to find a succinct formula to explain why. I will use this book in teaching and expect it will lead me to an answer.

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Development Under Adversity: The Palestinian Economy in Transition. By Ishac Diwan and Radwan A. Shaban. *Washington, DC: The World Bank*, 1999. Pp.xvi + 240. ISBN 0 8213 4418 8

With the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, it was hoped that the path for Palestinian economic development was finally on its way to being cleared. Decades of oppressive Israeli regulation of the economy, inspired by a desire to prevent competitive development while sponging off a captive market, would now hopefully come to a close. Equally, the vulnerability of Palestinian labour and trade to Israeli market conditions could be assuaged by domestic investment and open borders with neighbouring Arab states. Ex-patriot capital would come flooding back to fund new investment, supplemented by donor assistance to the Palestinian administration as it sought to develop new social and welfare provision along the lines of an enlightened capitalist economy. The subsequent Paris Protocol on Economic Relations were a sharp reminder of reality: with Israel holding all the cards, the Palestinians submitted to what amounted to little more than a renegotiation of the terms of economic occupation. A customs union between Israel and the Palestinian Areas was established which provided Palestinian producers with access to Israeli markets but denied the Palestinians anything remotely resembling genuine automony in economic decision-making. The Palestinians have continued to be subject to Israeli import taxation decisions, expropriation of (land and water) resources, the inequalities of competing with heavily subsidised Israeli agricultural produce and restrictions on their trade with neighbouring states. At an informal level they have also been subject to a variety of Israeli obstructing procedures such as the holding up of fresh export produce at ports until its spoils, seizures of incoming goods (especially technology items), and the non-refunding of import levies to name but a few, as well as the more insidious closures (preventing goods and labour from crossing the borders between Israel and the PA).

Early optimism has also been eroded by the activities of the Palestinians' own

administration. Corruption and mismanagement, the obstruction of NGO development activities in order to forestall civil society, the lack of technical and administrative competence, all have contributed to a growing cynicism regarding the prospects of an already feeble economy. Not surprisingly international donors have been slow to part with funds and ex-patriot capital has found few long-term viable opportunities in Palestine.

In consequence, and as this volume ably shows, the Palestinian economy has actually deteriorated since the Oslo Accords. The volume, which is the result of an extended joint project between the World Bank and the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, provides both an assessment of the precise causes of this decline, as well as analysing the strategic choices facing the Palestinian government in attempting to redress them. An historical overview of the emergence of structural imbalances within the economy is followed by examination of recent (that is, post-Oslo) developments. The picture is a depressing one of deteriorating living standards, falling per capita expenditure, declining per capita consumption and general income reduction. Over one-fifth of the population at the time of the survey (1995) was officially classes as 'poor' (an income of less than $2 per day). Particular problems stem from the Israeli policy of imposing repeated closures on the Palestinian Territories and from the dramatic reduction in the number of Palestinians given permits to work in Israel (from an average of 116,000 workers in the spring of 1992 to just 28,100 in 1996). Efforts at public sector expansion to absorb some of these workers have led to unmanageable budget deficits, worsened by rising administrative expenditures. Trade has been undermined by both closures and high transport and transaction costs. A flurry of business start-ups funded by both a burgeoning banking sector and diaspora capital has not resulted ultimately in capital investments and has all but fizzled out under the pressure of general economic failure. A survey of political developments over the same period highlights the problems incurred by an extended transition period, the limited nature of Palestinian authority, the unwieldy nature of the territorial arrangements and the unpredictability of violent acts and responses. Not surprisingly, the authors argue that resolution of political uncertainties, preferably on a basis advantageous to the Palestinians, is vital for recovery and sustained growth.

The second part of the book tackles the policies that are available to the Palestinian government to offset the disadvantages of their position and to make the best of those potential strengths within the economy. The essence of the proposed framework is diversification away from economic reliance on Israel, the removal of artificial constraints on the economy, the encouragement of more risk-sharing between international donors, private investment and the Palestinian government, and the avoidance of short-termism in policy-making. Areas covered include private investment, international trade strategy, the financial sector, fiscal management, built-in stabilisation, and donor assistance. A final section analyses policy options in education, health and infrastructure provision with an eye to the creation of an 'enabling environment for long-term growth'. All three sectors are in urgent need of modernisation and reform but, as the authors themselves acknowledge, even when the fundamentals are in place little can be achieved in terms of growth before political impediments are removed.

In sum, the book seeks out ways in which the Palestinian Authority can lay the groundwork for economic growth and create conditions for its sustainability in anticipation of political resolutions. The limitations of such policies *without* advantageous political solutions are clear, but so too is the fact that the Palestinians need not be passive victims in the process of economic deconstruction. There is much

that can be done immediately to improve the management, administration and policy-making of Palestinian economies and to make the most of indigenous assets. One might also argue that, until the Palestinian authorities are seen to be doing as much, they will be hard pushed to win over the weight of international political support that will be required if they are to achieve the political settlement they need.

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EU 'Global Player': The North-South Policy of the European Union. By Mirjam van Reisen. *Utrecht: International Books*, 1999. Pp.252. £20. ISBN 90 5727 035 8

This study of EU policy towards developing countries was sponsored by a number of European NGOs, including terre des hommes-Germany and Eurostep. The book's objective is to explore how a more effective European policy can be created, and a number of policy recommendations are proposed. Most of these recommendations relate to the administration, coordination and coherence of EU policy, in particular regarding the Lomé Convention with the 71-member African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States.

This book will be of most interest to those already concerned with the administration of European development cooperation, rather than the general reader. The text is presented in the form of numbered paragraphs and sub-paragraphs, each making short points or arguments. The question of what the EU's global role is, or should be, is not discussed much beyond a list of figures on page 28 and an introductory paragraph on page 32. The text would probably have benefitted from engaging with the academic literature on EU development policy, including studies by Grilli, Ravenhill and Zartman.

The most interesting of the book's policy recommendations is the suggestion that monies pledged to the ACP countries should be paid into a dedicated account for them, rather than being allowed to drift back into the EU member states' budgets (p.100). The author proposes increasing the powers of the ACP-EU Joint Assembly, but also creating an intergovernmental political assembly. The detailed discussion of the 'budgetisation' of the European Development Fund does not acknowledge that while budgetisation has certain advantages, the negotiated nature of the Fund was appropriate for aid recipients who were also sovereign states.

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