



Africa Development, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, 2006, pp. 189–194

© Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2006
(ISSN 0850-3907)

Book Reviews/ Notes de lecture

Tade Akin Aina, Chachage Seithy Chachage & Elizabeth Annan-Yao (eds.), *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004, viii + 339pp., US 20.95, ISBN: 2-86978-130-X (pbk.)

Mwenda Ntarangwi,
Augustana College, Illinois, USA

As the blurb on its back cover indicates, *Globalization and Social Policy in Africa* ‘examines the different areas of significant contact between globalization and the lives of ordinary people in Africa’ through the use of ‘empirical and historical studies.’ The book contains fifteen chapters divided into four different parts that specifically address the following: economic and regional trends; poverty and social services provision; globalization, women’s work and citizenship; and higher education and globalization. Published at a time when globalization has become the buzzword for international development, this book adds an important voice to the growing critiques of the whole project of neo-liberal economic models often deemed the panacea for socio-economic development in the global south.

Contributors to this volume are aware of the failure of the ‘development’ project fifty years after it was introduced in Africa and other regions of the world.

The trouble with this kind of ‘development,’ as the authors note, is that it is simply another name for economic growth that is devoid of any consideration for the social. It has long been assumed that economic growth will get rid of poverty by creating wealth that in turn will be used to solve social problems. As contributors to the volume show, this has not been the case and the era of globalization (which has come to be associated with economic liberalism), has indeed hurt many African nations and communities. Globalization, for instance, has undermined the legitimacy and power of the state in Africa. Given that for a long time the state has been the primary provider of social services, this globalization agenda of trimming the state has had very negative effects on the lives of the vulnerable majority in Africa. A few examples from the book illustrate this phenomenon.

Analyzing globalization in the Maghreb, Hammouda highlights the tight-rope that has to be walked between citizenship and religion where the former allows for a process of secularization that almost undermines the latter. With the push for democratization came the need for the state to relinquish some of its grip and monopoly on politics and a greater focus on individual freedoms that sought to free people from their communal obligations and relations. Thus, a specific Western economic thought has been mobilized as a universal human condition devoid of any historical particularities and shoved down the throats of a culture where religion is inseparable from the everyday. In a related case, Gimode argues that globalization has redefined the role of the state and allowed Islam (which has always sought to step in and redistribute wealth among the poor) to offer social services especially in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya where even government services are hard to deliver.

What is emerging from the arguments raised in this volume is that there is a one size fits all model being applied indiscriminately to all African countries even though not all states have failed in Africa. As Magubane shows in the case of South Africa, the state is not only under siege from globalization through a push for downsizing, it is also being asked to supervise its own demise. Yet, as Magubane shows, the sectors in which South Africa has world class technological and export capabilities are those in which state intervention has been greater. This then makes nonsense of the push by globalization to reduce the state's participation in development and shows how the key players of global economic fundamentalism are imperialists clothed in the rhetoric of change for the common good.

In a chapter based on fieldwork in Nigeria, Yunusa shows that with structural adjustment programmes came the dwindling of social service provision that consequently led to reduced participation in social activities necessary for building relationships as well as the inability to even eat certain kinds of foods such as meat and fish. Thus, instead of people becoming more advanced through globalization they are regressing into more poverty. In response to this regression, development becomes a phenomenon that is seen as separate chunks of 'projects' that need to be addressed individually. Ndiaye shows in the case of Senegal that social policy changes and 'innovation' engender a 'project approach' where each sector is managed through specific projects that run as long as development partners choose to support them. This new way of seeing development, however, has disturbingly escaped the ire of local intellectuals as Chachage shows in an analysis of higher education. He argues that even academics and political thinkers have steered clear of debates on emancipatory politics. It is no longer fashionable to have debates that seek to liberate Africans from domination and exploitation.

Instead, many are talking about African nations becoming globalized, that is, losing themselves in the global.

In the larger scope of things we thus see that social policy is about people, their livelihood, their plans for the future, and their strategies for economic success. Unfortunately, just as economic solutions for Africa's woes have failed so have social policies generated through economic models. This has been well addressed in this volume. However, while the contributors clearly show how negatively globalization has affected social policy in Africa, there is a lack of articulation of actual everyday experiences. This is, to a large extent, due to the fact that many of these contributors have not used any field-based data that articulates the thoughts, voices, and experiences of the people most affected by these global challenges. Such data would have helped give the contributions a more informed view of the socio-economic realities that 'ordinary people in Africa' experience.

Abdou Maliq Simone & Abdelghani Abouhane (eds.), *Urban Africa: Changing Contours of Survival in the City*, Dakar: CODESRIA Books; London/New York: Zed Books, 2005, xi + 305pp. US\$25, ISBN: 1-84277-593-6 (pbk)

Maurice N. Amutabi,
History Department,
Central Washington University, USA

Urban Africa reveals why Africa's urban spaces are increasingly attracting a lot of scholarly attention. There are many reasons for this. First, it is apparent that Africa's urban areas are the ones that by and large determine the political and economic trends, but rural Africa still holds sway in the social and cultural realm. Second, there is increased hybridity and multiculturalism that are leading to new questions, and new areas of inquiry. Third, interdisciplinary research, such as that deployed by the contributors to this volume, has allowed for new questions and answers, covering areas that urban anthropologists, geographers, historians and sociologists have not ventured before. Fourth, Africa is becoming increasingly urbanized, with many countries recording about 40 per cent urban populations. Thus, one is not surprised by the explosion of research in this realm and the interesting themes that these articles represent.

Most of the ten chapters in *Urban Africa* are quite impressive, with varying degrees of disciplinary and methodological emphasis, based on veritable

empirical research. While showing the spatial and cultural mosaic that urban Africa is, the book emphasizes the conflicting dynamics that African cities have displayed from the pre-colonial period to the present. Since AbdouMalik Simone's introduction is not easy to follow, the best place to start is perhaps the second chapter by Benedicte Florin, which is a compelling story. Florin seems to be interested in interrogating the relationship between urban policies and housing, and how people have perceived and received these policies. She uses satellite cities in Cairo as her case study. Although she wants 'to examine the relationship between the way some of the inhabitants of these new towns receive and interpret' (p.29) these policies, her chapter seems to lack the real voices of the people. Instead she presents the views of the government. It is supposed to be an engagement of peoples' experiences in an urban sprawl, but we end up with the role of policy planners and implementers, which should satisfy the segment of readers that is interested in that side of the equation. The third chapter by Anna Madoeff examines the role of *Moulids* in Cairo. It is the story of the city through public spectacle and rituals, an increasingly popular area for social and cultural historians. The chapter makes a great contribution to understanding how rituals can be used as vehicles for understanding city life, as people are paraded and objectified in their traditions and settlement pattern.

The fourth chapter by Jean Omasombo looks at Kisangani from the pre-colonial period to the present, highlighting issues of external hegemony, from Arabs to Europeans and how this city survived under the legacy of these pressures, seen in Islamic and Christian influences. It seems like Kisangani's strategic position has been its Achilles heel throughout history, but this does not undermine its role in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) development even today. After reading this chapter, it seems worthwhile to include Arabs and Afro-Arabs such as the Tipp Tip family in Zanzibar in those to pay reparations to slavery and the slave trade. The other issue that the chapter clearly brings out clearly is that the dynamics of mining and the attendant problems, from Johannesburg in South Africa, Kitwe in Zambia, and Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, seem to be replicated in the DRC in a very interesting manner. Perhaps a comparative study of these dynamics, especially exploitation of the locals is overdue.

In chapter five, historian Bahru Zewde undertakes a historical analysis of Addis Ababa starting from Axum, through Gondar to Addis Ababa, from the imperial regimes to Mengistu Haile Mariam's revolution and the Derg to the present. At a certain point, there seems to be too much focus on the mundane such as the founding of Addis Ababa by Menelik II and the role of Empress Taytu in all this, which are already textbook material that should not appear in a specialized book such as this. But that does not deny the chapter

its potency, although it dilutes the focus on more juicy and avant-garde issues that the author raises, such as the Ethiopian exceptionalism where the bourgeois develop suburbs near airports and yet throughout the world, this class hates noise pollution even though it has helped to generate it. Through the development of suburbs near airports, we are given a rare glimpse into the contradictory bourgeois taste in Ethiopia, so that one wishes that Zewde had developed this issue more strongly, as it makes nonsense of the prevailing notion that the bourgeoisie hate noise and that is why they retreat to quieter suburbs. He also illuminates the Italian legacy in Ethiopia that many scholars have not engaged and which nationalist historians have always shunned.

Chapter six by Edgar Pieterse lacks a clear thesis – what does the author intend to convey? That is why twenty one pages down the line (on page 158) we now hear, ‘For my purpose in this chapter, I want to draw attention to the political potency of discourses about the identity of the city....’ The thesis comes just seven pages before the end! Secondly, the chapter does not belong to this book. There are more concrete issues about identity in African cities than just ‘discourse’, which has become such nebulous edifice. Mohammed-Bello Yunusa’s promise in the seventh chapter is interesting. The author promises ‘to make a link between spatial structure and characteristics of high-density areas on one hand and the lifestyle, livelihood and social fabric on the other’ (p. 203). There are some attempts to make these links in this suburb of Zaria city, known as Anguwar Mai Gwando, but the reader is frustrated by the chapter’s presentation style and structure, for it retains an irritating research proposal format that inhibits the free flow of ideas, which are boxed into too many tables.

In chapter eight, Victor Adetula revisits the old question of religious-ethnic rivalry using ‘burial societies’ such as Berom Progressive Union and Jassaw Development Association as windows to understanding sectarian tensions. He argues ‘that ethnic and cultural associations shape urban politics, provide platforms for competitions and struggle for space, opportunities and resources...’(p.206). Whereas this is true, these ‘burial societies’ are not anything new and are basically transplanted from rural areas and operate as centres of ethnic and religious identity. Nowadays, due to elitism and increased education among members, they often use fancy names such as ‘welfare’, or ‘development’ but remain largely similar to those in the 1960s throughout urban Africa. It is interesting to know that these associations still exist in Nigeria and are influencing politics and religious affiliation, at a time when scholars are talking about hybridity and multiculturalism facilitating eradication of ethnic and religious identities.

The last two chapters, nine and ten, address similar issues, which are not at all new in Africa's urban milieu. Mahamadou Abdoul's study on Pikine, a suburb of Dakar, Senegal, constitutes the ninth chapter. Pikine emerged as a suburb in 1952 and became an autonomous town from September 1996, covering sixteen district councils. The chapter speaks about common urban problems such as 'high population growth rate, overpopulation in the neighbourhoods, a high employment rate, [and] peculiar environmental problems (coastal pollution, periodic flooding in some areas, an inadequate drainage system), increased insecurity and violence....' (p.237-8), thus raising no new questions and therefore no new answers. Chapter ten is by Mohamed Gheris, and discusses housing in Marrakech, the capital of the Tensift El Haouz region in Morocco. His real analysis starts on page 264, paragraph 3, and not on page 261. The chapter highlights the chaos that accompanies scarcity of housing in any urban setting. Morocco, like other African countries, has an unresolved housing problem, for he says that 'The proliferation in recent years of the effects of unhygienic and clandestine housing is a clear indication of the failure of the low-cost housing policy [at Marrakech]' (p.286). But many of his arguments are also boxed in many tables that are spread throughout the chapter.

However, despite the versatility and great contribution of this book to our understanding of urban Africa, there are questions that still linger. There is the factor of ethnic pluralization and associational life in Africa, where, as in the case of Kenya, there are *Kisumu ndogos* (literally: small Kisumus) in every urban area occupied by the Luo and Kambi Somalis occupied by the Somali which are still being perpetuated by succeeding generations. This should be researched. Also, there seems to be an emerging middle ground created by the civil society in African urban spaces, often bringing together youths or women from diverse ethnic backgrounds, so that we can begin to wonder whether this is a new rebirth of urban Africa without the previous identities and tensions. Also, one wonders whether the democratic wave that has rocked dictatorships across the continent and spawned more democratic forms of expression such as riots and demonstrations in urban areas will bring about new changes in urban Africa. Nevertheless, this book adds an important new voice to the expanding and critical literature on research in Africa's urban spaces. It offers us an unusually powerful and passionate critique of the previous studies that have only addressed the role of the government, although we still want to hear more of often muted voices of the urban underclass that have not been articulated enough by some of the articles. This is an important study that deserves a wide audience in the academy.