

Development and Livelihoods in Southern Africa: An Introduction

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Although Southern Africa is freed from colonialism and apartheid, the effect and legacies thereof still result in immeasurable devastation, especially among the African peoples of this region. Humiliation, domination, exploitation, subjugation, dishonoring and suppression caused the deculturation and dehumanization of the African. Being alienated from their culture, tradition and identity, there is a strong need and a clear call to establish an authentic African identity by appealing to and reinterpreting African culture and values. In this regard the South African President designate, Thabo Mbeki, has been responsible for the development of the concept "African Renaissance", which has become widely used and accepted in Africa. It envisages an approach for the utilization of social, cultural, economic and political resources, based on the promotion of transformation, empowerment, equity and cultural revival.

Colonialism and apartheid also cast, violently, the African into European capitalist systems and deliberately excluded them from access to land, capital, employment and education. Today, poverty is one of (Southern) Africa's most intractable legacies and has grown into one of the continent's most urgent concerns. During the last decade it has been highlighted in many ways and there are masses of literature analyzing development and livelihoods in (Southern) Africa. The contributions to this edition thus do not represent a unique "first". However, the focus of this volume is to present the issues of development and livelihoods in a specific metaphysical context, namely the recognition of the significance of African values and ethics in order to promote sustainability. The South African Constitution and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of the ANC government, to a great extent, created the framework for it. The RDP can be viewed as a compre-

hensive and detailed plan, which forms the basis for political, social and economic transformation. The South African Constitution, on the other hand, not only protects human and minority rights, but by recognizing the different indigenous languages, also gives back human dignity and opens the door to ordinary, poor, powerless people to participate meaningfully and freely in discussions concerning their own affairs. The contributions of respectively Wessels and M.A. Erasmus must be viewed in terms of the aforesaid background. Wessels, for example, gives an analytical perspective of the RDP and points out that it is an integrated socio-economic policy framework which seeks to develop strong and stable democratic institutions; to ensure a prosperous society; to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly growth and development; and to address the moral and ethical development of society. The role of the mother tongue in development is a phenomenon, which although recognized by social scientists, is seldom seriously taken into account in the formulation and implementation of development policies in Southern Africa. In dealing with development on local government level, M.A. Erasmus illustrates that the role of language comprises much more than merely a strategy for survival. She empirically indicates the importance of language towards individual capacity building and creativity, elements, which are indispensable for the sustainability of development.

It is well known that debates on development have in the past years been influenced by political, economic and theoretical reorientations. In his article on "post-development" and "anti-development", Robins uses ethnographic data to rethink some of the basic assumptions and theories in this regard. Not only does he contribute to the ongoing debate, but also his argumentation has important implications for the

way I think the empirical data of the case studies presented in this volume must be considered.

Lemke *et al.*, in dealing with food security (which becomes a central aspect in development and livelihoods studies), create an innovative methodological approach: They argue in favour of interdisciplinary research, envisage a distinctive combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, provide guidelines for inter-methodological triangulation and, finally, clarify appropriate concepts.

The first part of this edition, in other words the above-mentioned four articles, construes the heuristic framework. The second part is more applied in nature, exemplifies current research on development and livelihoods and deals with several case studies from different countries in Southern Africa (viz. South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe). A noteworthy study comes from Dzingirai who writes about Zimbabwe and offers an example of the growing potential for conflict when a local, marginalized ethnic group (the Tonga) and a group of outsiders (Ndebele immigrants) have diverging perceptions of the "proper" use of resources. This not only puts environmental security in jeopardy, but also results in underdevelopment and poverty among the host community. The essay also reveals the aggravating effect of diverse cultural and political perspectives on sustainable livelihoods, because they encompass different perceptions of the environment and influence the pattern and choice of management.

Milazi, from a political science perspective critically examines South Africa and Botswana's military intervention in a neighbouring sovereign state, Lesotho. The three countries in question are all members of the South African Development Community, which broadly speaking, has to foster development in the region. Milazi illustrates firstly how the intervention has resulted in counter-development and caused an almost complete breakdown in livelihood activities. Angry Lesotho citizens reacted to the situation induced by outsiders by wantonly destroying foreigners' (mostly South Africans') businesses and properties, which jerked the economy to a standstill. Secondly, it appears that polarized

political views create a fragile sense of "community". It is not only a decisive factor in the dividing of the Lesotho community, but also reflects the absence of infrastructure and services, determines who will be beneficiaries and erodes livelihood security.

The political economy of apartheid forced high levels of landlessness, poverty and unemployment on Black South Africans. Land reform is long overdue, and for reasons clearly understandable, the issue is highly emotional and of great priority. The impact of land reform on livelihoods was investigated, respectively, by de Wet and P.A. Erasmus in the Eastern Cape and in the Free State. De Wet opens up new sources of ethnographic data regarding successful land settlement. He points out the complexities involved in forming new social ties, the development of a new set of institutions and the generation of a new community. Significantly, is also the way structural systems influence resource utilization – the potential problems of a collective approach serves as a good example in this regard. Two inferences may be drawn from P.A. Erasmus's contribution. One is that it is wholly unrealistic to expect that people who came from the apartheid system will immediately emerge as viable beneficiaries of land reform programmes. The other inference is that the high potential for land conflict, which emanates from different ways of thinking about control over resources, entitlement patterns, systems of governance and cultural traditions, places a serious impediment on livelihoods.

This volume collects the findings of current empirical and theoretical research and presents the voices and experiences of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa on aspects of their development and livelihoods. The main intention of this volume, namely to give recognition to the significance of African values and ethics in order to promote sustainability, is highlighted from different perspectives. And although it focusses on a specific region, the basic assumptions and principles are, I believe, of value for, and applicable to, other parts of the so-called Third World.