

BOOK REVIEWS

Anthony J. Bebbington, Samuel Hickey and Diana C. Milton, eds., *Can NGOs Make a Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives*. London, Zed Books, 2008.

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This edited collection is based on papers delivered at the fourth ‘Manchester’ conference on NGOs, in 2005. Besides two introductory chapters and a conclusion, there are fourteen chapters divided into three thematic sections. These chapters cover an incredibly diverse range of NGO forms and practices, including research, advocacy and development, and they are written by academics, practitioners and activists. Amongst other foci, there are discussions about health promoters in Bolivia, the international mobilization of slum/shack dwellers, and village-based interventions in rural India.

The volume raises important points about the complex and contingent relations between indigenous NGOs, international NGOs, global donors, nation-states, local government systems, and social movements. Regrettably, the chapters do not sufficiently interrogate the notion of ‘non-governmental organization’; in fact, it seems unlikely that the different chapters are even talking consistently about the same organizational form. As used in this collection (and in the ‘NGO literature’ more broadly), the term NGO is so all-encompassing and inclusive that it becomes almost nebulous and without meaning. The notion needs to be unpacked with finer and more nuanced conceptual thinking and tools, or discarded altogether if found conceptually wanting.

The overarching theme that is meant to draw the chapters together is the question of NGOs as ‘alternatives’, although this is pursued with considerable unevenness. Of course labelling NGOs as alternatives is not a particularly new conceptual endeavour. After all, much of the earlier literature on NGOs (including publications based on previous ‘Manchester’ conferences¹) sought to identify and define the ‘comparative advantage’ of NGOs vis-à-vis nation-states in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In this sense, NGOs (as part of civil society) were seen as ‘alternatives’ to corrupt and inefficient states, or perhaps as complementary to them.

The international turn to NGOs, and indeed the massive explosion of NGOs from the 1980s, was part and parcel of neo-liberal restructuring on a global scale, including programmes of privatization, ‘de-regulation’ and de-centralization. Intriguingly, nowadays NGOs are posited to be ‘alternative’ insofar as they bite the hand (the neo-liberal donor community) that feeds them, i.e. to the extent to which they seek to move beyond the ideologies and practices of neo-liberalism. This is one key sense in which the editors (in their introductory chapter) employ the term ‘alternative’, though not the only sense (see below). The three main sections focus on NGO alternatives under pressure, pursuing alternatives and being alternative.

Generally speaking the chapters cover thematic ground that has been trod often in the voluminous NGO literature, including recurring points about NGO upward and downward accountability, NGO effect and impact, and the space/room available for NGOs to manoeuvre. However, to their credit, many of the chapters offer reasonably 'rich descriptions' of NGO and donor practices (for example, chapter eleven on the Dutch NGO known as ICCO and its current organizational restructuring) and of social and political processes (for instance, the relationship between state policy formation/implementation and the varied use of evidence by advocacy NGOs, as discussed in chapter seven).

Without doubt, each reader of this volume will find a few chapters that are noteworthy and innovative from his or her perspective. I highlight two chapters that I find especially significant and illuminating, both of which are found in the section on 'alternatives under pressure'. I end with a few comments on the introductory chapter by the editors.

Chapter three, by Evelina Dagnino, neatly and perceptively captures the intricate relationship between neo-liberalism and NGOs when she speaks about the 'perverse confluence between participatory and neo-liberal political projects'. Although these projects are said by Dagnino to be fundamentally different in substance, in practice there are often remarkable similarities in these 'projects' (used in the Gramscian sense) in terms of discursive meanings and institutional practices. She highlights this in relation to the different understandings and applications of the notions of civil society, participation and citizenship. Her argument implies that sensitive renderings are required when evaluating whether particular NGO forms and practices are challenging and transcending neo-liberalism or contributing to its reproduction; the substantive content of these forms and practices must be thoroughly investigated before any such conclusion can be made. This means that a particular NGO practice (for example, initiating and supporting community forestry ventures) cannot necessarily be labelled as neo-liberal simply because it is consistent with neo-liberal restructuring (in this case, the privatization of state forests).

Chapter six (by Alan Fowler) raises the critical point of the 'new security agenda', in the light of the 9/11 attacks on American soil. Given the ongoing and (in fact, deepening) dependence of NGOs on official development aid, Fowler brings to the fore 'serious questions' around 'the growing integration of overseas development assistance ... into a comprehensive security strategy for the West'. He outlines the numerous constraints, some seemingly self-generated and self-imposed, which inhibit progressive NGO work in the context of the global 'war against terror'. Indeed, as Fowler indicates, poverty reduction measures may merely become just another instrument (almost literally) for reducing social and political instability in the nations of peripheral capitalism, thereby reducing any challenges to the world hegemony of the United States. Disturbingly, this is a position that USAID has officially adopted (and practiced in Iraq), whereby American foreign policy is seen to rest on the 'three D's' strategy, that is, diplomacy, defence *and* development.²

Finally, the introductory chapter by the editors focuses on the critical distinction between reformist 'development alternatives' and more far-reaching 'alternatives to development'. This relates to the distinction, also noted by the editors, between – respectively – 'big d' and 'little D' development, in which the former involves specific

development interventions in peripheral capitalism (by outsiders) and the latter involves the contradictory development processes embedded in world capitalism.³ According to the editors, NGOs are normally involved in (if not restricted to) refining development methodologies – i.e. in formulating development alternatives – by changing the mix of participatory and partnership techniques (along the lines regularly emphasized in the development series published by Oxfam⁴). Despite their lofty missions and best intentions, NGOs have clearly failed to demonstrate a similar disposition and capacity to engage in alternatives to the unevenness of global capitalism, or to seek an alternative to development alternatives so to speak.

At the same time, whether or not NGOs are ‘designed’ to facilitate alternatives to capitalist development is highly debatable. In order to clarify this point, more general sociological theorizing of NGOs as a particular kind of ‘social form’ in modern capitalism is needed. Unfortunately, in terms of conceptual work and insights, this volume (like much of the ‘NGO literature’) remains within the confines of middle-range theory. Mega-theorizing about NGOs remains a serious weakness in the NGO literature, but is a necessary basis for advancing our understanding of the world and work of NGOs.

Notes

1. Particularly influential has been the volumes edited by Michael Edwards and David Hulme.
2. See for example USAID, 2002. *Foreign Aid in the National Interest* Washington.
3. Crewe and Harrison make a similar distinction, between the development industry and the development system. Crewe, E. and E. Harrison, 1998, *Whose Development? – An Ethnography of Aid*, London, Zed Books.
4. For instance, Eade, D., ed., 2003, *Development Methods and Approaches – Critical Reflections*, Oxford, Oxfam GB.

Dapo Adelugba and Philip Ogo Ujomu, eds., *Rethinking Security in Nigeria: Conceptual Issues in the Quest for Social Order and National Integration*. Dakar, CODESRIA, 2008. x plus 162.

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This book is likely to strike many readers as an audacious new intervention in one of the better known discourses in political science and international relations – the discourse on high politics. The terrain of high politics is characterized by the laws, policies and actions that states pursue in order to ensure their very survival. With its core focus on national security, high politics has conventionally been contrasted with economic and social issues that (according to conventional wisdom) have a less direct relationship to national security.

While the dichotomy between ‘high politics’ and ‘low politics’ is increasingly being questioned, with many analysts rightly seeing such a distinction as tenuous,

Rethinking Security in Nigeria attempts to move away from the realist-militarist ferment of the discourse on high politics. Indeed, the goal of the seven chapters of this book is not just to introduce an epistemology that 'softens' the realist aura that the discourse on national security has historically exuded, but also to expose the fact that 'national security' is a problematic concept whose character is not fixed.

The failure of military might, intelligence-gathering capabilities and economic prowess to guarantee the security of the world's most powerful nations necessitates a departure from a realist-militarist approach to national security. To understand the nature of insecurity in general, and in particular insecurity in a postcolonial African country like Nigeria, it is imperative to part ways with established paradigms.

It is against this background that the book offers an aesthetic-ethical-cosmological alternative, with analytical insights drawn from philosophy, theatre arts, and African and European studies. The book's substantive chapters (besides the introduction) expound on this alternative, the contributors being mainly the two editors (writing as individuals or in collaboration with each other, or with their colleagues). Five chapters are authored in this way; only chapters five and six do not have the editor's direct imprints.

The most theoretically robust exposition of the book's intent is in chapter two, authored by Ujomu. This is where the case is made for the infusion of insights from the humanities into the debate on national security. But such insights come alive only when one apprehends the limitations of the realist paradigm, which the chapter carefully documents. Ujomu's critical engagement with the 'idea and scope of security' is particularly refreshing. A realist-militarist conception of national (and international) security, Ujomu argues, fails principally because the multiple impulses lurking behind the very notion of security form a shifting configuration that is not amenable to a simple analysis.

We know, for instance, of the inherent dilemma in states' efforts to secure themselves (within their territorial boundaries): often their neighbours view such efforts as a threat to their own security. What is more, the 'idea of human security' is often discursively different from the 'idea of transnational human security'. The 'idea of societal security' is not exactly the same thing as the 'idea of women's security'. Even so, Ujomu further suggests, it seems that developed and developing countries do not quite mean the same thing when they talk of security: 'the sense of insecurity from which [Third World] states suffer, emanates, to a substantial extent, from within their boundaries'. Thus, political office holders in many Third World countries tend to define national security 'primarily in terms of regime security rather than the security of the society as a whole' (p.13). In the particular case of Nigeria, the empirical setting of the book, Ujomu criticizes 'the serious tendency [by governments to emphasize] fear, chaos and conflict as these arise from situations of violence and instability' (p.14).

As the above logic unfolds, the imperative of a new, soft idea of security becomes inescapable. It is the 'philosophical idea' – or more specifically, an 'ethical and aesthetic idea'. But what does it mean? This is the question that leaps at the reader, and which the author of chapter two tackles at considerable length. Yet the reader will be disappointed if he or she is searching for a very coherent discussion. The chapter examines themes such as imagination, morality, values, consciousness, human nature, supernaturalism (the possibility that insecurity might originate from a world beyond

the one we see), transcendentalism, inhumanity and several others. Set in Nigeria, the volume does raise issues that Nigerian readers will find familiar, but which western readers especially might find audacious, if not incomprehensible. But then an aesthetic-ethical-cosmological framework was always going to be at worst provocative, and at best a soft entry into the discourse on high politics, a terrain long driven by the realist paradigm.

Every time we come face to face with, or picture in our minds, an object we love – an object of beauty – we receive in return joy, pleasure or other emotions of comparable strength or depth. This central theme in aesthetics may have no immediate link to the subject of security. Yet, argue Ujomu and Adelugba, it does – especially when the links between aesthetics and ethics are well demonstrated. The argument is made in chapter three that once humanity begins to find value and beauty in social order, harmony and fairness, it will do all in its power to promote the ethical values and social systems within which order, harmony and fairness flourish. ‘The spectral issues arising from the interrogation of attitudes, presuppositions, norms, conduct and systems of socialization’, they maintain, ‘are all within the province of the aesthetic consideration of security’ (p.60). The chapter thus emphasizes the role of fiction, ‘possible worlds’ and cinematography in the imagining of security.

Many readers will find Irene Adadevoh’s chapter on the ‘Gender dimensions of national security and human security problematic’ equally insightful. The chapter details how non-belonging, gender inequality, segregation, the institutionalization of violence and the masculinization of security institutions have blighted the conceptualization of and quest for security. How else, she might have asked, has it become so easy to think of security in military and defence, rather than in human development, terms? Factoring gender into the security discourse immediately breaks the conventional, state-centric mould of this discourse, even though it presents challenges that Adadevoh’s chapter neither acknowledged nor examined.

The major strength of this book is its soft epistemology. It infuses the concept of security with a mundaneness that is bound to elevate its relevance among Nigerian readers particularly, and shine a new light on the country’s real vulnerabilities. By emphasizing the importance of local cosmological discourses, appealing to aesthetic, ethical and broader societal possibilities and sensibilities, and moving away from state-centric notions of security, the book fills an important gap in a discourse that has conventionally been about fear and might. At the very least, we now can speak of an ‘idea of security from below’. These strengths far outweigh the obvious syntactic weaknesses in many of the chapters.

Isaac Mazonde and Pradip Thomas, eds., *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Intellectual Property in the Twenty-First Century: Perspectives from Southern Africa*. Dakar, CODESRIA, 2007.

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This book discusses the challenges of identifying, protecting and advancing southern Africa's Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The book is a result of a workshop convened in Botswana in 2003, at which academics and artists were afforded the opportunity to discuss IKS and IPR and their implications for Africans. A significant challenge is that the book has not been carefully edited and therefore comes across as a collection of essays rather than a coherent text. This also makes it difficult for the reader to follow the arguments being made by the authors and to perceive connections between the chapters. Unfortunately, Mazonde's introduction to the volume signals the forthcoming lack of coherence, as it does not clearly articulate the main points made in the book. The problem of coherence gets worse in other chapters, where the authors seem not to have been encouraged to carefully re-read and edit their chapters. Despite these problems the essays do offer some interesting points to consider.

Masoga begins the discussion by motivating for deeper and more meaningful conversation between Africa and the West around issues of IKS and IRR. A lack of 'conversation' and the relegation of Africa to the 'periphery' have, in his view, resulted in a long and exploitative relationship in which the West has appropriated African indigenous knowledge and intellectual property, using it to advance its own priorities. While greed appears to have been a motivating factor in the exploitation, Masoga also argues that the West's misconception of culture and its disregard for indigenous modes of knowledge sharing have furthered the exploitation. Thomas and Nyamnjoh add to this argument, discussing the commoditisation of indigenous knowledge. Focusing on Intellectual Property (IP), they note the rapid growth of the digital economy in the 1980s and its role in reinforcing the 'global economic dominance' of the US, Western Europe and Japan (p.16). In particular, they state that proposals related to Trade Intellectual Property (TRIPs), imposed by three organisations with business interests in Europe and North America were actually rejected by the developing world. TRIPs are also meant to globally harmonise IP legislation but in fact diminish developing countries' control over their intellectual property. A similar argument is made in terms of copyright. The authors argue that today, 'the benefits of copyright are enjoyed for the most part by owners of IP [which] are invariably the cultural industries, rather than those who created the work either as individuals or through team effort' (2007: 17).

At this point the discussion takes a rather strange turn away from digitisation. The authors discuss and criticise anthropologists, who they see as the main culprits exploiting indigenous knowledge. They ask, 'should the publications and public lectures of anthropologists be copyrighted, if these consist of belittling photographs of

the so-called “primitive natives” and are written with scant regard of the dignity and humanity of those they have studied down? ... such copyrighted but problematic research does not seem to have diminished with the end of apartheid’ (pp. 18-19). They cite the case of a devious (anthropology?) professor, who used indigenous students to collect information on his behalf and used that information to make recommendations for the management of the community. The authors associate this kind of covert and exploitative research with anthropology.

Much of this discussion is relevant for the historical practice of anthropology in Africa and may be interesting to those who have no knowledge of anthropology’s past or even past discussions on anthropology. However, it is not an accurate depiction of current anthropology in southern Africa and the discussion clearly disregards the present practice and practitioners of anthropology. Even in South Africa, anthropologists are increasingly issued from post-apartheid generations, are of non-European heritage, are ethically sensitive and uphold human rights. Among them, one finds a profound awareness of the negative outcomes of exploitation in the research and publications process and action to combat unethical practice. Furthermore, by focusing on the ‘objects’ of research, the authors fail to acknowledge the extent to which the researchers and authors are themselves exploited in the research and publications process, either by the research subjects, those funding the research or publishers.

This ‘diversion’ derails the discussion on digitisation and intellectual property and fails to deepen the authors’ very interesting statements on the ambiguities of digitisation noted at the start of the chapter. The authors attempt to regain momentum by refocusing on the consequences of commoditisation, making the valuable observation that, ‘in many communities at the margins of capitalism, the knowledge of oral cultures that is not recorded in any tangible material form is deemed to be in the public domain’ (p.22). There is, as they rightly note, a disregard for other ‘regimes of ownership and control’ (p.23), in which the right to collective ownership and the sharing of IP may be asserted, as opposed to its sale and individual copyright. They also rightly call for the creation of ‘an independent transnational grassroots movement’ to create more space for developing countries and their people to negotiate their rights to and management of IKS.

In Kiggundu’s essay we learn that until 1996, producers in Botswana were unable to ‘register a patent, trade mark or design’ (p. 27), unless it had been approved of in either the United Kingdom or South Africa. This was because the British Copyright Act of 1956 remained in force despite Botswana achieving independence in 1966. Thus for a very long time Botswana suffered the loss of its indigenous knowledge. Examining the interface between IP law and indigenous knowledge, Kiggundu discusses the many ways in which indigenous knowledge has been jeopardised. Most people interviewed on the subject of their oral history and knowledge never knew that these were ‘confidential’ and that they had a right to withhold such information. Under the existing IP law, such information could not be considered confidential, as people imparting it did not originally insist on confidentiality or state that it could not to be exploited for personal gain. Similarly, in terms of patents, the law requires an invention to be industrially applicable and it makes provision for time-limited and documented protection of industrial design and trademarks. None of these, according to the author,

offers protection for the products of indigenous knowledge as the latter is not always industrially applicable, subject to time-limited protection or easily subject to timely documentation. Kiggundu concludes that the Botswana Copyright and Neighbouring Act 2000 represented a major breakthrough for IK protection in that country. However, he also calls for Model Licensing Agreements, subject to consideration by indigenous communities, universities, WIPO and UNESCO which can be used in many developing countries. He also highlights the important role of universities in informing the relevant communities about their particular indigenous knowledge rights.

Morolong's contribution on the protection of folklore under modern IP regimes identifies specific limitations to its protection under the existing copyright system. Although WIPO makes no provision for its protection in its 1967 Convention, in 1976, UNESCO and WIPO produced the Tunis Model Copyright Law which did make provision for the protection of folklore. However, its successful implementation largely depended on existing supporting legislation and resources within countries wishing to make use of the model. Morolong extends the discussion on the specific limitations ('novelty, inventiveness, originality and duration of protection', p. 52), imposed by IP law on folklore and advances alternatives for its protection. The most useful of his suggestions include: *droit de suite* in which creators of a work have the right to share in its value should it later produce substantive profit, the invocation of human rights laws to protect folklore and indigenous knowledge and the encouragement of *sui generis* systems locally to identify and protect folklore. A major benefit of the latter is that folklore need not be 'converted' to a tangible form to be recognised and protected and any use of it for gain, even by members of the 'community', requires authorisation.

What is perhaps missing from this detailed essay (and also from the previous essays), is a critique of 'community.' The authors tend to portray southern African communities as relatively undivided, homogeneous, unchanging and in agreement about IKS and IPR. Even a non-expert can imagine situations in which powerful individuals within communities attempting to control the use of folklore to the detriment of others, community members using folklore for individual gain even within the 'traditional' context and the invention or recasting of tradition so as to exploit folklore in a sanctioned context.

A similar lack of critique is apparent in the chapter by Moahi. Covering similar ground to Thomas and Nyamnjoh, he discusses copyright in the digital era and states that IK is often viewed negatively by local communities, as science and 'laboratory experimentation' (p. 73) constitute 'real knowledge.' Moahi argues that if IK is not documented, there is a danger that it might disappear but if it is documented, it is 'automatically copyrighted' (ibid). He poses the same question as the authors preceding him and comes up with the same answer. The primary beneficiaries are the 'outsiders': historians, anthropologists and pharmaceutical companies. This argument while valid in many ways, disregards the existence of indigenous historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and scientists in southern Africa and their role in promoting/exploiting IKS and IPR. A more interesting question might be what actually happens to indigenous knowledge when it is documented. Given that quite a large proportion of African indigenous knowledge is intangible, its documentation has the potential to reduce its dynamism, 'freeze' local creativity and lead to the

'accreditation' of individuals as chief knowledge bearers. Recognising these potential problems might produce alternative solutions, ones that encourage maintaining the dynamism of and collective responsibility for indigenous knowledge.

Segobyee makes one of the most useful contributions to the volume, offering a more dynamic view of communities, IKS and IPR. He says that there is a 'need for a broader reading of the ways in which communities have constructed their knowledge systems over time and how they interact with their environments in creating systems of meaning' (p. 83). This is needed not only because of the continued influence of Euro-American legacies in the region's heritage but also because of the assertion of transnational solidarities (i.e. the use of Ghanaian *kente* cloth among African-Americans in the US), which lead to the appropriation of indigenous knowledge and products. Most recently, tourism, as a transnational process and product, has had a major impact on communities, IKS and IPR. Developing countries seek to use their heritage resources to increase national revenue via tourism and the 'developed' world seeks (via tourism) to consume the exotic and to make the 'developing world ... the object of consumption' (p. 85). In this context, it is the very commoditisation of the community itself that is of issue, resulting in the loss of privacy and dignity and the ossification of culture. Segobyee points to participatory processes of heritage and resource management which may remedy the situation and argues that these processes are both desirable and possible.

The two chapters on IPR and IKS in South Africa note that IKS legislation is slow in coming and that in the meantime communities are losing their IP and IK rights. The diversity of South Africa's flora is also being exploited. Under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, IKS and IPR assumed greater importance, as these were deemed necessary to the implementation of the African Renaissance. The first essay outlines the history of IKS legislation in South Africa. Since 2000 a draft policy on IKS has been in the process of development. In 2002 an Intergovernmental Committee on IKS was instituted but it appears that coordination across the different government departments represented on the committee is difficult. In the second paper a case study shows that traditional medicines, which fall within the ambit of both IPR and IKS, are used by a majority of South Africans and are inadequately protected. Traditional African health practitioners have little knowledge of how to protect the resources and their knowledge, especially from outside market forces and prospectors. Both authors call for a more local approach to IPR and IKS legislation echoing Segobyee's earlier call for emic work on how communities understand, use and manage their resources.

Overall, this volume raises important issues regarding IPR and IKS protection and management. However, there is no conclusion to the book and this makes it difficult for the reader to bring the various threads of the discussions together to thoroughly consider the situation and potential of IKS and IPR in southern Africa.

Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, eds., *Ways of walking: Ethnography and practice on foot*. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.

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This edited volume is a collection of essays on 'ways of walking', as practised both by ethnographers/geographers/architects and many pastoralist and hunter-and-gatherer groups around the world. In the case of the professionals, walking is a means of doing research; in the case of indigenous people, it is an important everyday subsistence practice. The collection is based on papers presented at a three-day workshop on 'walking' in Aberdeen in 2005. The editors, who are also authors in this volume, work from the epistemological assumption that the world is socially produced. Through foregrounding the topic of 'ways of walking', one that is often relegated to footnotes or to short sections on methodology in most academic texts, the authors aim to explore the creative processes that 'brings objects into being' (p. 1). The stated aim of the editors then is to move beyond the traditional focus in making academic writing on what is being done (*content*) to how that is being done (*process*). Examining the footnotes of methodology so to speak, and the footprints of 'having been there', would, they contend, illuminate something more than just our physical bodies. Paying respect to the lineage lines of Mauss and Bourdieu, the editors can indeed say in their introduction, echoing the title of Mandela's autobiography, that 'Life itself is as much a long walk as it is a long conversation, and the ways along which we walk are those along which we live' (p. 1).

The introduction is no more than an overview of the following chapters and as such gives us little insight into the initial thinking behind the calling of the workshop. What it does do, even if not through the short introduction, is to speak to recent theoretical considerations of the body as a mere symbol or site or signifier, perhaps born out of a frustration with overly linguistic approaches to culture, and a refusal to see the body only in linguistic terms. But there is no one theoretical line being argued for in the collection and it contains a diversity of pieces and approaches to the topic. Below I briefly discuss a few of these contributions.

In chapter 2 Tuck-Po Lye takes the reader on a fascinating excursion through her ethnographic descriptions and footnotes of the 'phenomenology of walking for the Batek'. This is an account of walking with a group of Batek hunters-gatherers in Malaysia, who are lowland peoples living close to Malay villages where supplies can be bought and where they can find temporary sources of employment. She does well not to paint an artificial picture of a pristine, isolated group of hunter-and-gatherers; her ethnographic descriptions are littered with references to contact, both historical (slave trade) and contemporary (tourist walking trails and encountering tourists as she walks with the Batek). It seems that the Batek do a lot of walking and so did Lye: during fifteen and a half months of fieldwork between 1995-6 she moved residential locations 80 times (averaging six days per location), and whilst living among a Batek group she stayed in 32 different campsites and two settlements (averaging two weeks per

location). While the forest was an 'other-place' to her, Batek approached the forest without such fears. While they were scared of 'Malay madmen' wondering the forests, which in all likelihood stems from a history of slave-trading during which forest-people were raided by people of lowland polities, the Batek approached the forest with both fear and confidence. It is a fascinating account of walking with a group of hunters-and-gatherers, experienced by means of living and walking with and listening to their stories: 'Talking and walking are inseparable [for the Batek] ... If walking creates the path and if walking itself is an act of sociality, then can the path have any meaning without the stories of the people using it? ... Paths are social phenomena, and are remembered in relation to social events' (p. 26).

In her contribution Alice Legat writes about the links between story-telling, walking and learning among a group of the Dene (or Athapaskan-speaking people) of north-western Canada, currently making a living between the Great Slave and Great Bear lakes in the Canadian Northwest Territories. She worked on a project which had the aim of documenting 'local Dene knowledge' for the purposes of resource management and self-government. She came to see the links between 'walking stories', 'leaving footprints' and experiencing place as a form of validating 'walking stories'. Dene children grow up listening to stories about walks and paths; 'relations with places are initiated as soon as children first hear the narratives' (p. 36). As they grow older they get to walk these very same paths they had heard of through stories: 'the period between listening to stories and walking them marks an in-between phase of learning during which people who have heard 'talk' do not yet know the 'truth' or reality of a narrative' (p. 37). This direction of thinking allows Legat to describe walking as 'the experience that binds narrative to the acquisition of personal knowledge' (p. 35), as the practice that 'validates the reality of the past in the present' and by so doing 're-establishes the relation between place, story and all the beings who use the locale'. Those interested in the burgeoning field of the 'anthropology of learning' will find her chapter useful, as she manages to link these to a broader field: 'Listening to stories and following the footprints of those [Dene] who are more knowledgeable allows one to think by drawing on philosophical understanding and practical knowledge that originated in the past. This is a perspective that encourages everyone [among the Dene] to acknowledge that there is much to learn' (p. 39).

The contribution by Thomas Widlok is a curious one; retaining the rather Eurocentric view that the discipline of social anthropology deals with cultural difference and describing it as a European project. In it Widlok aims to compare the 'ways of walking' of two groups as they traverse, or used to traverse, the arid landscape of northern Namibia. The one group is the San (the collective 'Bushmen of southern Africa' who walked for their livelihood) and the other is members of the confluence movement (members of 'a subculture within a subculture' whose favourite leisure time activity is walking with the aid of GPS technology and communicating this to an internet community (pp. 51-2). 'Confluencers' are the members of this Confluence movement and their aim is to visit each of the latitude and longitude integer degree intersections in the world and to take pictures at each location. How one can compare such disparate groups (in time and space) without even a mention of the political economy that enables such modern-day Columbus types to walk Africa for fun remains unclear. The comparative statements that Widlok produces are also not clear:

‘... there is a limit to the degree of control that road-makers can exert over people’s movements. The presence of roads (or well-trodden paths more generally) is both an attraction and a disincentive, not only for confluencers and committed outdoor enthusiasts but also for ‘San’ and others who walk the land in daily routines of making a living and of getting around. Both groups have to face the fact that simply by using a route they cannot help but establish some sort of path or trail that others can then follow, or deliberately choose not to follow’ (p. 60). His notion of ‘path-dilemma’ – which refers to walking in the wild and ‘inheres in the way that one person’s opening of a path may, for others, effect a closure’ (p. 53) – seems to be a well sounding phrase for re-introducing rational choice theory as explanatory framework for understanding the walking choices people make. Widlok is clearly not ignorant of some of the postcolonial critiques of European anthropology – he even refers to them. But his failure to pay any attention to power, politics and privilege in his comparison of how these two ‘groups’ walk northern Namibia makes the comparison unsuccessful. As the only chapter in the book engaging with ‘Africa’, this is a disappointing contribution.

Pernille Gooch’s contribution tells the story of a group of *Van Gujjars* pastoralists in the Himalayas (known in the region as *ana-jana lok*, the ‘coming-going people’), and their buffaloes, as they walk the region for greener pastures. Unlike Widlok, she foregrounds the political economy of the region in her understanding of their ‘way of walking’. For the *Van Gujjars* walking is not a pastime; no, the bodily movement of ‘feet following hooves’ is their main technique of subsistence. But this technique has recently come under threat as physical barriers are erected on the landscape and as the state enforces its view of nomadism or ‘moving as a way of life’ as an abnormality. The *Van Gujjars* are also walking into discursive barriers as the discourse of environmental destruction – ‘devastated mountain landscape drifting rapidly towards irreversible destruction’ – blames the migratory herders for overexploitation of natural resources. In this highly politicised landscape, walking takes on a political dimension – ‘a resistance by moving feet and hooves’ (p. 79). While not everybody would swallow Gooch’s assertion that ‘Successful pastoralism demands a strong feeling of understanding between herders and the animals they herd, tantamount to a shared world-view, whereby the world can be perceived through the senses of the animals in question’ (2008: 73), it is clear that indeed ‘everyday walks of path and placemaking in forests and meadows, undertaken during winter and summer respectively, constitute tightly woven webs of capillary threads that are bridged by the arterial walk of transhumance’ (p. 71). Walking is about the last thing that keeps the *Van Gujjars* from sitting down (*beithna*), or from becoming like ‘stones that cannot easily be moved’ (p. 71).

Readers hoping for ethnographically-informed approaches to walking in urban landscapes should not bother to buy this book. The few urban case studies or chapters (by Lavadinho and Winkin on Geneva, Curtis on Aberdeen and Lucas on Tokyo) are tucked away in the back of the volume. Of these the one by architect Raymond Lucas is the most innovative and theoretically-inspired. ‘Getting Lost in Tokyo’ is a project based on the author’s observations of Shinjuku subway station in Tokyo in which he seeks to ‘generate new architectural spaces out of my experiences of a specific place and time’ (p. 170). Finding inspiration in early modernism, especially the figure of the *flâneur* in Baudelaire and Benjamin as the city dweller who actively and creatively

appropriates the landscape and life of the city as opposed to the passive consumer of the late modern city, Lucas drifted (from the notion *dérive* associated with the Situationist International) through the urban spectacle of Tokyo's Shinjuku station. Asking himself: How is it even possible to negotiate this place? What are the characteristics of the Tokyo subway? Lucas then started drifting counter to the flow of people in the place during rush hour and then reconstructing from memory his flow on a flowchart diagram. Through these diagrams he hoped to capture the journeys he made, exiting, changing lines and getting lost. A further complication was dividing the diagram into episodes and then presenting these in a system of notation used in dance choreography (Laban notation). Analysing these diagrams and notations threw up several recurring motifs, the results of which are reproduced in part in his chapter.

This volume would be of use to students of the 'anthropology of learning' and some of the chapters could be useful for their contributions to discussions of methodology and ethnographic practice. Scholars looking for a serious theoretical innovation on the topic of walking will not find it here; neither would scholars looking for a consideration of the ethnography of walking in Africa.

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