

African Economic Development. Edited by Emmanuel Nnadozie. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2003. Pp. xli, 662. ISBN 0125199929.

This book is a twenty-three chapter-long spear that aims to kill the woolly mammoths that are courses on African economic development. Unfortunately, the book's aim is not true. The chapters are repetitive, disconnected, the editing shockingly bad, and there are significant absences (little on gender or debt, for example).

Chop the book up, and the teacher will have some darts—not suitable for woolly mammoths, but capable of bringing down smaller prey. Among these are several fine contributions that would be useful in undergraduate courses. Chapter 5, for example, is an excellent survey of growth theories and their application to Africa by Marcel Fafchamps. His argument is that both neoclassical and endogenous growth theories miss the point: the pecuniary externalities of agglomeration are the real game in town. This seems sensible. Unfortunately, this shift in perspective yields no silver bullet for policy; Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and the three dozen other strongmen on the continent will receive no answer to the question central to Fafchamps' article: How long to wait until agglomeration externalities are played out in China and what to do in the meantime?

Paul Collier in Chapter 8 reprints a stimulating summary of the relation between ethnic diversity in Africa and economic and political outcomes. He reiterates a controversial finding: ethnic diversity only matters when decoupled from democracy. Multi-ethnic societies that are democratic perform fine. The chapter also includes a fine review of theories of ethnicity in political action. This literature is hobbled by a lack of attention to the problem of scale and to the technology of identity. Kin, clan, and tribe are important identities everywhere in the world. Collier is at pains to note that they are effective identities for structuring economic transactions in an environment of limited information and repeated interaction. Being tall or liking salty food would not be useful identities for solving the social problem of who to trust. Effective identities are relatively immutable, geographically encompassing, and easily verified. Being tall misses the second property, while liking salt misses the third. But the identity that matters for the national stage, referred to as 'ethnicity' in most African contexts, which generates the ethnic markers that corral voters into blocs, is plainly neither immutable nor verifiable. A vast literature shows precisely how mutable national-level ethnicity is. So does it make sense to treat the two kinds of identity—local tribe and national ethnicity—as the same thing? Local identities can co-exist, rather, with national-level ethnicities. The question of the production of national-level ethnicity—its endogeneity—is left undiscussed. This is unfortunate, because it may well be that democracy and dictatorships produce different kinds of national ethnicities. One thinks of the colonial period, when ethnicities were produced quite deliberately by authorities for reasons of both administrative convenience and Machiavellian preservation of illegitimate regimes.

Some of the other decent chapters in the book are quite adequate. Chapter 3, by Nnadozie, is a decent introduction to concepts and measurement of growth. Chapter 7 by N.Vink and N. Tregurtha on poverty is a reasonable quantitative assessment of the quality of life of South African farm workers. Mario Azevedo offers a good survey of health issues on the continent in Chapter 9, and Azevedo and Nnadozie in Chapter 10

present a nice introduction to education issues. Surveys on financial development, by Léonce Ndikumana, and globalization and development, by Richard Mshomba, will be useful to students in introductory courses. Femi Babrinde's introduction to regionalism in chapter 19 is silent on empirical estimates of the cost of trade diversion in the African context, an absence that considerably reduces the value of an otherwise decent essay.

Collier's chapter on ethnicity is best read after a straightforward Chapter 11, by John Quinn, that reviews the evidence on democracy and development. Quinn's chapter is pitched at the right level for this volume, and students will then be ready for the more challenging chapter by Collier. The opposite is true for the dynamic panel GMM estimates of Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong's Chapter 12 on political instability and for the muddled summary by E. Wayne Nafziger of a project exploring inequality and conflict in Africa. Nafziger's outcome variable, humanitarian emergencies, is not well-defined in the chapter, so it is difficult to read without going to other papers by the author. The chapter seems to be simply a direct 'lifting' of a discussion of regression coefficients, but without any of the regression results presented, leaving the reader with an impression of arbitrary pronouncement that this or that factor matters or does not matter. The sketches of real conflicts scattered through the text add to the impression of a hasty cut-and-paste document.

These last two are not the only bad chapters in the volume. Oddly, the introductory chapter by the editor is among the least useful. Nnadozie attempts to motivate the study of African economies, but in very confused and hesitant way. A section on 'principal messages' begins with a brief discussion of the W.A. Lewis model, continues with a summary of recent cross-country growth regressions, and then arrives at the principal message that there is no principal message because studies of African economic development are in flux, are complex, and are confused. Surely the goal of an introduction should have been to resolve, simplify and clarify.

Following the vein of bad chapters, Chapter 6 on population growth is marred by an inability to clearly specify the difference between causation and correlation between growth in population and growth in income per person. An awful chapter on land tenure and agricultural development includes a bizarre section lauding Zimbabwe's growth in maize production, with nary a nod to the daunting land tenure issues that have helped turn Zimbabwe into a basket case. A chapter on trade and development reprints 7 pages of tables giving per year, per country, data on trade flows, in micro-font sizes. These and others suffer from poor writing, disorganization, inappropriate discussions of technicalities, and lack of focus. A closing chapter by a Cambridge, MA 'brain trust' of James Deussenberry, Arthur Goldsmith and Malcolm McPherson fails to deliver originality. Instead, the authors survey all of the policy failures on the continent, and conclude that if the policy failures are reversed, growth will follow. How pat is that?

The book is intended for students, but the instructor should be very wary of assigning this book. One editorial mistake was to have each chapter begin with a list of 'key terms'. The first "key term" of the book is an infelicitous term: African dummy. What kind of a book oriented to students who do not know regression analysis starts out by highlighting a negative coefficient on a dummy variable? On page 5 the reader is introduced to SSA, with no explanation of what that stands for. A key term on page 15 is "Italophone". Can this really be a key term for Africa, especially when "Fancophone" *sic* is already on the list? Many of the key words for many other chapters are nonsensical:

“Operationalization” as a key word? In some chapters the writing is quite bad. The first sentence of chapter 2, purportedly an overview of African economic development, is: “The map of Africa is like a giant jigsaw puzzle, indeed a tapestry of countries.” Should a student be exposed to such poor writing? If I seem caustic, it is because the publisher, Academic Press, an imprint of Elsevier Science, seems here to be in the business of duping a well-meaning public. Around the world, courses on African economic development will be taught with greater frequency. Should Elsevier cash in on this trend, by selling an amoebic product? Yes, one of the editorial lapses is letting an author refer not to anemic economic growth but to amoebic growth... that mistake does not seem “aptly pertinent”, to use another risible editorial lapse of the book. Shame on them for not providing the most basic input into the production of a book: a good copyeditor.

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