from the official record of the times. Although Melber successfully reads between the lines of official accounts, demonstrating the ways in which less powerful actors manoeuvred within the limitations imposed on them by hegemonic nations, his assessment would have benefitted from reference to contemporary accounts by African participants, such as Kwame Nkrumah's *Challenge of the Congo*, and from interviews with the dwindling number of African participants in these momentous events.

ELIZABETH SCHMIDT
Loyola University Maryland

Innovating Development Strategies in Africa: the role of international, national and regional actors by LANDRY SIGNÉ
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 232. $105 (pbk).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X1900065X

Rarely has a region in the world experienced as many innovations in development policy, in such a short span of time, as Sub-Saharan Africa. In the two decades immediately following independence, many African countries conducted development policy along Keynesian interventionist lines and in some cases inspired by the ideals of socialism and neo-Marxism. In this period the state was heavily involved in coordinating economic activities and in allocating the fruits of production. Then the 1980s saw a sudden and complete reversal as markets were liberated from the state. This was the start of the structural adjustment years. Two decades later, just as the new millennium was underway, a new but less drastic innovation took place: markets would continue leading the quest for economic growth while governments would be given the task of ensuring that growth was pro-poor. Thus began the era of Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans.

Much of the development scholarship on Sub-Saharan Africa concerns itself with normative policy assessments: were the right policies chosen and, if so, did they work as they were supposed to? Absent from this large scholarship is an analytical understanding of how policy innovations or development strategies arise in the first instance. Why was development policy in Africa much more interventionist in the 1960s and 1970s and drastically less so in the 1980s and 1990s? What accounts for the hybridized nature of development policy in the new millennium?

It is this gap in the literature that *Innovating Development Strategies in Africa* seeks to fill. For Signé, a stable set of independent variables accounts for much of the innovation in development policies and strategies observed in Africa since independence. These explanatory variables are ideas, interests and time.

Signé argues, '[Development] actors' ideas are expressed in how they understand development and what solution this understanding implies' (38). The two main contested ideas on development in Africa have been neoliberalism and neo-Marxism or socialism. Material interests, on the other hand, 'guide [development] actors' strategies in embracing or resisting [policy] innovation' (39). Time refers to moments in history where conditions have been favourable or unfavourable for policy innovations to occur. Time presents 'critical junctures', 'windows of opportunity', 'crises' and 'favourable conjunctures' for innovation (40). Rather than setting out the relationships between these variables in advance, the author seeks

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X1900065X Published online by Cambridge University Press

to explore how these have played out in specific ways in the context of the making of development policies in Africa.

Using nine detailed country case studies Signé argues that in Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in the case of structural adjustment policies (SAPs), the ideas of the international financial institutions (IFIs) prevailed over those of African governments. This is because the ideas of the IFIs came with the backing of conditionalities attached to material benefits (such as budget support) to incentivise acquiescing governments. In this sense, the IFIs were able to shape the interests of African governments to the extent that they adopted externally imposed ideas regardless of whether they believed that these would produce the desired development outcomes.

One criticism of Signé's work is that it seems to work off the implicit assumption that African actors are in the main motivated by self-preserving material interests. One especially gets this impression from reading Chapter 5, where despite African states' articulation of alternative ideas (such as the Lagos Plan of Action) the interest of political leaders in maintaining their grip on power always ultimately prevails. This is a bit unfair given that African actors have often been driven by the same ideals that motivate development actors elsewhere. One can even argue that in the misguided decision to adopt SAPs, African policymakers genuinely believed that the ideas of the Washington Consensus would free millions from the yoke of poverty. For example in May 1987, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia abruptly cancelled an International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsored stabilisation programme once it became apparent to him that it was causing widescale misery (see N. Simutanyi in *Third World Quarterly*, 1996). Kaunda acted this way knowing very well that suspension of the programme would mean the withdrawal of financial support from the IMF and allied institutions. Thandika Mkandawire (in *World Politics*, 2015) has provided an eloquent critique of analytical approaches that presume that African actors are in the main driven by material interests.

This criticism notwithstanding, this book deserves to be widely read and closely studied, not least because it provides a detailed account of the various forms that development policy has taken in Africa over the last half century or so.

GRIEVE CHELWA
University of Cape Town

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X1900065X Published online by Cambridge University Press