

documentation and understanding of Bashada society, with its viability, its integrity and its fascinating people.

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Ruth Prince and Hannah Brown (editors), *Volunteer Economies: the politics and ethics of voluntary labour in Africa*. Woodbridge: James Currey (hb £60 – 978 1 84701 140 4; pb £19.99 – 978 1 84701 139 8). 2016, 280 pp.

This volume takes the moral economy of volunteering in Africa as its central focus. Drawing from ethnographic and historical case studies in a variety of African contexts, the authors explore the relationship between labour in the ‘voluntary sector’ and notions of citizenship, identity and value. In doing so, the chapters in this volume provide valuable insights into the role of power and inequality in reshaping labour markets and determining what constitutes a ‘good’ volunteer.

It is commonly cited that volunteering and the reliance on voluntary labour as a tool of development stem from the neoliberal thinking of the late twentieth century. Although acknowledging the prominent place of this form of engagement within post-welfare societies, this volume also challenges these beliefs by expanding our historical view of volunteerism. It does so by placing contemporary patterns of voluntary labour within a deeper historical trajectory that extends back at least to the colonial period, if not before.

Subdivided into four sections, the book focuses on the practice of volunteering, broadly understood. Relayed through rich ethnographic detail, the authors present diverse case studies, including European youth on gap year excursions, elite African boarding school students volunteering through their Bible Club, low-income African participants in medical trials, and doctors working with Médecins Sans Frontières, among others. Rather than feeling disjointed, however, the volume’s diverse depictions of voluntary labour is one of its greatest strengths. Asking the reader to consider ‘voluntourists’ alongside low-income individuals who rely on clinical trials to access healthcare challenges the reader’s own conceptions of moral economic activity as well as the basic definition of the word ‘volunteer’.

The case studies in this volume add complexity to the landscape of participation by mapping the many intersections of moral and economic activity in African volunteering. Again, the diversity of perspectives portrayed in the case studies makes the examination of how moral and economic interests interact in African volunteering a particularly fruitful exercise. The ethical question of ‘who can afford to volunteer’ has previously been raised by scholars debating the role of volunteering in reinforcing social inequality. However, by considering this question alongside its companion, posed by Bruun (Chapter 4), Colvin (Chapter 1) and Kelly and Chaki (Chapter 2), of *who cannot afford not to volunteer*, the volume raises new questions about the ethics of the increasing professionalization of volunteering in Africa.

The debate over how labour relates to the public good is clearly visible throughout the volume, no more so than in Ståle Wig’s chapter (Chapter 3) on volunteering in Lesotho. Wig uses the case study of several expatriate volunteers at a local NGO to reveal the discourses of morality that often accompany requests for compensation from local volunteers. These tensions reach their apex during an event

hosted by the NGO where the expatriates' refusal to provide 'handouts', a stance grounded in what they see as best practice within the development community, collides with local norms of hospitality and understandings of global inequality. Within this example, as in many others in the book, the author demonstrates that whether or not an activity is considered to be 'for the public good' is deeply related to cultural norms and relations of power.

As the authors in this volume make clear, those with economic and political power are able to set the limits on how much compensation or personal benefit can be derived from voluntary activities before they are no longer considered 'altruistic'. This power is routinely exercised by wealthy volunteers who see no problem adding their experiences to their résumés, but question the practice of providing transport reimbursements in excess of the costs actually incurred (Wig, p. 80). The story is similar for development workers who pay volunteers but avoid the word 'salary' for various moral and ethical reasons (Bruun, Chapter 4; Kelly and Chaki, Chapter 2). As the authors of this volume illustrate, this exercise of power often reinforces inequalities rather than addressing them, a stated goal of many volunteer projects.

Importantly, in addition to providing localized rich ethnographic detail, the examples discussed in this book are skilfully positioned by the authors and editors within the context of global norms of participation, charity and neoliberal governance. Volunteers inhabit a liminal space, not usually serving as official state representatives, but often doing the work that the state once did: providing health-care, maintaining local environmental conditions and teaching in schools. But the boundary remains; both Jennings (Chapter 5) and Redfield (Epilogue) describe the real challenges that exist for NGOs asked to take on the burden of the state without sufficient resources or mandate. As the chapters depict, this change in governance affects local labour markets but also shapes how volunteers view their own endeavours. These voluntary acts become part of a 'highly individualized' voluntary sector, where participants enter into this form of labour to meet specific goals, rather than to contribute to the overall well-being of the community. As such, the growing voluntary sector contributes to new understandings of belonging and citizenship within African communities.

The primary criticism of the book lies in its somewhat limited geographical and thematic scope (four of the chapters focus on Tanzania and six on health). As the authors make such a convincing argument for the importance of understanding local history and cultural norms, the lack of primary ethnographic material from North, Central and most of West Africa is a limitation. That being said, this criticism does not detract from the volume's very valuable contribution to the literature on voluntary labour and the practice of African development.

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Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: the road to non-governmentality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pb £23.99 – 978 1 107 60252 6). 2015, xvi + 281 pp.

The principal question of Gregory Mann's book is 'what is government?' (p. 8). He explores it by studying controversies about 'neo-colonialism' and 'neoliberalism' and investigates how sovereignty was exercised during and after the