

thinly illustrated textbook appropriate for an upper-division interdisciplinary course on Africa or development. It has the benefit of being a collaborative effort with diverse voices, including those of several women and authors from the continent.

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Garth Andrew Myers. *Disposable Cities: Garbage, Governance and Sustainable Development in Urban Africa.* Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2005. xv + 187 pp. Maps. Photographs. Cartoons. Tables. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$89.95. Cloth.

This book is about neither garbage nor urban Africa; it is about the experience of three African cities—Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar in Tanzania and Lusaka, Zambia—with the U.N. Sustainable Cities program during the 1990s and early 2000s, analyzed from the perspective of four themes identified as having defined African development during that time: neoliberalism, sustainable development, good governance, and the politics of cultural difference. Since solid waste was identified as a significant problem in all three cities and each program had waste disposal components, the experience of solid waste management was an obvious perspective from which to “explore what it [was] like to manage, to cope, and to live” (3) in these cities at that time. As a cultural geographer, Myers was interested in the intersections among several topics: transitions from forms of state socialism to capitalism; confrontations between social democratic donor agencies with traditions of popular participation and international neoliberal agendas; and the demands of urban residents seeking greater inclusion in governing processes and institutions. This complex subject matter was to be set in the larger debate among cultural geographers about the need to move from current styles of theory and discourse-driven work to work that has a more “material” base and thus is more meaningful in Africa and relevant to an activist agenda. Finally, the author wanted to bring both African scholars and the African continent into urban studies and urban planning literature and discussion.

The author’s very good intentions have been largely unmet. It is perhaps useful to note that fieldwork was carried out at one location in late 2003 and writing continued into 2005, when the book was published. This left little time for data analysis and synthesis, and almost none for editing. Each chapter, and each section of a chapter, begins with a statement of what will be said and ends with a summary statement of the argument made. In between are collections of information, anecdotes, and opinions, presented in often colloquial American English (leading to concern for readers in Dar, Zanzibar, or Lusaka). There is no statement of methodol-

ogy or outline of fieldwork activities, and research chronology is provided only anecdotally. Myers refers to documents from the National Archives of Zambia, implying at least a brief foray there. Historical sketches of each city provide simplistic characterizations of the different eras, and the richness afforded by comparative urban analysis is unexplored. Interesting questions raised in the first chapter concerning the significance of a changed dominant international political economy and the replacement of idealism with “money cultures” regionally and among donors are not answered. Also alluded to in many sections, but never addressed directly, is the fundamental problem of the processes by which societies with authoritarian traditions, whatever their origin, can be shifted in the direction of greater participation and representation. Similarly, Myers suggests that time is an essential factor but does not explore the topic.

One of the book’s most successful features is the inclusion of African scholars and their ideas about urban studies. Both are well cited in this book. The final chapter, a postscript, provides an overview of the development of the field of cultural geography and a discussion of postcolonial cultural geography that serves as a useful introduction to the subdiscipline. For these reasons, and because of the paucity of literature on urban Africa, this book can be recommended for those desiring direction to source material or themes to consider in the much-needed development of scholarship in African urban studies.

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