

interstices of power. The discourse on rights can also be used in a more radical fashion, but that depends upon Malawians. For example, Englund mentions how the idea of rights entitlement led secondary school students to raise highly critical questions about the quality of education (pp. 65–6). The legal aid case shows not only the reification of Malawi's inequalities, but also the potential to challenge labour practices, if Malawian lawyers were interested in so doing. This difference in interpretation is a particularly serious issue, as it can have important implications for practical action involving, as it does, a radically different appreciation of human rights initiatives.

The second problem has to do with methodology. Englund considers the insights he presents as special because of the ethnographic method he uses. He refers, for example, to 'ethnographic witnessing' which has a connotation of superiority associated with religion. Englund presents, however, not only some good systematic observation, but also a lot of anecdotal evidence, illustrative examples, wide or wild conjectures, and simple opinions that do not warrant the authority he assigns himself. This is especially clear in the chapter on moral panics. His starting point: there is a scare or panic among parents of children in Lilongwe's primary schools. Rumour has it that they will be snatched and that their body parts will be sold on one of President Muluzi's trips abroad. Englund makes a link between this panic and the state of education in Malawi: the latter makes the panic understandable. He provides no evidence, however, that the parents made this link. It appears, rather, to be merely a supernatural explanation for wealth, as is the case with the other examples of such fears mentioned as being associated with shopkeepers. It is mere assumption to give to this and the common supernatural beliefs in Malawi a moral dimension, unless there is specific reference to moral issues. The book therefore requires scepticism from the reader, and it would have been better if Englund had been more sceptical about his interpretations.

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The Democratic Republic of Congo: economic dimensions of war and peace by MICHAEL NEST, with FRANÇOIS GRIGNON and EMIZET F. KISANGANI

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Emanating from a project of the International Peace Academy, the book investigates a subject which has caught the limelight of research on contemporary conflicts: the economic dimensions of war (and peace). Contrary to what the title may insinuate, readers should not expect an in-depth analysis that refers to the greed *vs.* grievance debate with particular respect to the conflict in the DRC. The core of the book is dedicated to the question of whether and how attempts to solve the conflict have addressed economic agendas of the parties to the conflict. To this extent, international involvement for a lasting peace in the DRC emerges as the central topic of the book.

In addition to the introduction and the conclusion, which draw a number of interesting lessons from the case of the DRC, the small volume consists of four chapters. Chapter 2 by Michael Nest provides a concise and useful overview of

the various wars (local, national, regional) which have often been lumped together as constituting one single conflict. Also authored by Nest, chapter 3, 'The Political Economy of the Congo War', examines the interests of the various parties to the conflict, including Congolese actors, neighbouring countries and multinational firms, paying particular attention to the evolution of interests that underpinned the peculiar dynamics of the war over time. Although mainly based on well-known material, Nest offers a carefully balanced assessment that makes clear that 'while economic agendas became a prominent part of the conflict, they emerged as a function of war' (p. 31). To the degree that the 'cost imperative of waging war and the presence of conditions that created many opportunities for profit making' (p. 54) gave rise to economic agendas, these added to and at times overshadowed the initial political and security interests of the actors involved.

The following contribution by François Grignon, a former director of the Central Africa project of the International Crisis Group and now serving with MONUC, analyses to what extent economic agendas have been incorporated into the peace processes associated with the Congo War. By meticulously tracing the peace negotiations from the Lusaka ceasefire agreement of 1999 to the Pretoria accord of 2002 and beyond, Grignon advances the compelling argument that all sides to the conflict played a 'fool's game' with regard to the importance of addressing economic agendas for finding a lasting solution to the conflict. Not only did all parties deny that deeply entrenched economic interests had become part and parcel of the conflict. Even after the issue had hit the international spotlight, all the actors concerned literally pledged innocence: the Congolese actors by pretending that they would henceforth 'support radical reforms in the management of the DRC's state and economy', which they had and arguably still have no intention of putting into practice; the international community, notably the Western members of the UN Security Council, by indulging in hypocrisy about the economic interests that their multinational companies were pursuing in the DRC. As a result of half solutions, and because no side was serious about implementation, as well as the neglect of local conflicts and spoilers in Eastern Congo, Grignon concludes that peace in the DRC is a 'negative peace – actually, no peace at all in much of Eastern DRC – that leaves most grievances and structural opportunities for economic predation intact' (p. 92).

The yawning discrepancies between economic and political attempts at the macro-level to promote peace and the realities on the ground are further elaborated by Emizet Kisangani in his chapter on the 'Legacies of the War Economy'. Like nearly all the contributions in the volume, he emphasises the historical continuities of predatory mechanisms that have characterised colonial and post-colonial rule in the Congo, some of which have been partially transformed during the war. Given the shortcomings of international efforts to address the causes and consequences of conflict, he remains deeply sceptical about the prospects of the various regulatory frameworks that aim at restructuring Congo's war economy to an economy of peace. This is mainly because the entitlements (property rights in general, access to land in particular, citizenship etc.) that would provide ordinary Congolese with incentives to support a new political and economic order in the DRC are barely taken into account by the kind of macro-level policies advocated

by the international community. In summary, *Economic Dimensions of War and Peace* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the political and economic dynamics in the DRC that will almost certainly remain pertinent after the holding of the post-transition elections in late 2006. In that regard, this reviewer's impression that the manuscript has taken some time to be published (as is apparent from a lack of reference to more recent events in the Congo) seems to be a minor deficit.

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African Urban Economies: viability, vitality or vitiatio? edited by D. F. BRYCESON and D. POTTS

Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. xii + 353. £68.00.

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This book, an edited volume which draws from a workshop on 'African Urban Economy' in Leiden (2001), discusses an important topic: urbanisation in contemporary Africa. By presenting several case studies from East and Southern Africa, it aims to shed light on Africa's urban paradox: the coincidence of urban demographic growth amidst economic malaise and strong urbanisation forces in the absence of industrialisation. The introduction presents the central thesis: 'urban growth patterns [in East and Southern Africa] changed due to new demographic and economic factors' (p. 92): falling world market prices for agricultural products, increasing possibilities in the booming informal sector, and the end of civil wars in the region. Consequent in-migration overstretched fragile urban facilities, which led in many cases to a decline in urban life quality.

To substantiate this point, the authors present ten empirical chapters, divided into three sections. The first section, 'City Economies in the Making', presents political economic aspects of the spatial organisation of Maputo, Mombasa and Kampala. The second, with the title 'Urban Livelihoods and Social Dynamics', discusses (shifting) patterns of social and material organisation in Kampala, Nairobi and Mogadishu. The third, entitled 'Urban Welfare, Housing and Infrastructure', identifies changes in settlement and employment practices in Johannesburg, Chitungwiza (Zimbabwe), Gaborone and Dar es Salaam.

In the last part of the volume, the editors reach an interesting conclusion: in contrast to a body of recent studies reporting that rural–urban migration in east and southern Africa remains mostly circular, they claim that 'return migration is precluded for a growing number of second and third-generation urban dwellers who no longer think of rural ancestral areas as their home' (p. 327). Thus African cities are portrayed as being no longer part of a rural–urban network and are instead developing their own momentum, and should, according to the authors, be understood as such. Though this is a challenging thought, it does not entirely convince the reader, which is related to three analytical problems.

First, with the exception of chapters 8 and 11, the empirical chapters of the book mainly rely on census and other quantitative data, and focus on trends and the workings of abstract demographic and economic 'forces'. Concentrating