

Advances in African Economic,
Social and Political Development

Lucky Asuelime
Joseph Yaro
Suzanne Francis *Editors*

Selected Themes in African Development Studies

Economic Growth, Governance and
the Environment

 Springer

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Editors

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Chapter 1

Expanding the Frontiers of African Development Studies

Lucky Asuelime, Suzanne Francis, and Joseph Yaro

A growing number of scholars acknowledge the interconnectedness of the myriad of problems and prospects across Africa as a relevant part of global development discourse. Given the ever-increasing importance of knowledge for the scholarly agenda and practice of African Studies, we present a picture of contemporary issues in African development. Although, this volume is focused on development issues, it presents in one volume a multi-disciplinary deeply contextual text on the important themes in development studies covering land questions, housing, water, health, economic liberalization, climate, environment, and gender. Though Africa's problems transcend these basic sector issues, they still remain at the core of development given the fact that many in Africa are food insecure, have poor access to health, water, housing, and are increasingly affected by global environmental change and global neoliberal economic policies. These themes are a microcosm in the general understanding and study of global development issues that confront humanity. This is hoped will lead to novel analytical frameworks, the emergence of new conceptual approaches, and empirical accounts of relevance to scholars studying Africa as well as practitioners in African development and policy makers.

The realities of underdevelopment and development, environmental pressures, policy development and global governance continue to challenge various existing

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theoretical and conceptual approaches in the study of development in Africa. After several decades of scholarly study and development practice in post-colonial Africa, many of the development indicators are still not encouraging even though some countries have made important strides in development policy. The specific country studies in this volume illustrate the diversity of the African continent and demonstrate how unique contexts impact upon different levels of achievement. The global-local interactions defining the landscape of development in Africa are critical in any analysis of contemporary African development and for policy-makers looking to the future. In this book we aim to present deeply contextually grounded studies of contemporary African development to the general discourse broadly construed as African Studies, showing how changes over the past three decades muddy existing theoretical lenses.

The Structure of the Volume

The volume is divided into two parts. In Part I, consisting of four chapters, the authors consider four key development imperatives in Africa—climate, water, land and labour. This is followed by the second part of the volume in which authors provide a consideration of the key developmental challenges faced in one African state—Ghana.

In Chap. 2 of the volume, Hannaford considers *Climate, Causation and Society: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Past to the Future*. In this chapter she considers the causal role of climate in human history and assesses the precise role and significance of climate variability on past societies. Previous criticism regarding determinism reflects a general failure to appreciate complex interrelationships, and related research would greatly benefit from the application of the concepts such as vulnerability and resilience. Hannaford claims that climate history offers an analytical framework to incorporate these concepts and clarify the complexities of past climate-society relationships. The focus on climate history is on the premise that it offers various spatial and temporal scales across Africa that can enrich the historiography.

Narsiah and Woldemariam in Chap. 3—*The Poor and Differential Access to Water in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*—provide empirical data on water services in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They show how sectors of the population access water which illuminates the ways in which a section of the poor population is treated differently, which is inherently discriminatory. The claims made by the authors are rooted in the concept of ‘dual circuit of supply’ and pricing which supports the empirical material of differential access to water of the poor.

In Chap. 4—*Land and Identity in Africa: A Case Study of the Banyamulenge of The Eastern DRC*—Saibel examines the complex identity of the Banyamulenge in South Kivu. She illustrates how the contemporary struggle of the group has to be understood in a historical perspective. The (different) historical contexts thus contribute to the identity of the group and consequently “ethnic” leaders have

used history and understandings of traditions to legitimize the group ‘essence’. The main argument is that ‘collective identity is subject to change, shift and reconfiguration depending on historical events and the political, social and economic context’. Present day usage of the group name is based in the colonial past, or/and, that its usage has continually been politicised by competing interests.

The final chapter in the first part, Chap. 5 by Esther and Shepard—*The Dynamics of the Gendered Division of Labor in Agro Forestry: A case study of Njelele Ward*—introduces a critical gender perspective to development issues in Africa. Esther and Shepard present a discourse on the uneven distribution of rights, access and positions in the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe. Women play a major role in agricultural production; carrying out most of the work that ensures food security. In this chapter, Esther and Shepard suggest key strategies to redress the gender asymmetries in the agro forestry industry in Njelele and the linkages this might have in the management and development of Agro Forestry in Zimbabwe.

The volume then turns to a consideration of land, housing, environmental change and healthcare in Ghana. In Chap. 6—*Beyond Panaceas in Land Tenure Systems in Ghana: Insights from Resilience and Adaptive Governance of Social-Ecological Systems*—Akamani conceptualizes land tenure as the ‘system of formal and informal institutions governing people’s relationship with one another and with the land and natural resources on which they depend’. Land tenure systems rely on traditional institutions for managing access to communally owned lands. Using Ghana as a case study, the authors elucidate the challenges associated with tenure security, economic efficiency, and sustainable resource management. This analysis highlights the need to move toward institutional frameworks that can mediate the complex and dynamic relationships between people and land.

Oforu-Kusi and Danso-Wiredu, in Chap. 7—*Neoliberalism and Housing Provision in Ghana*—examine how externally imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes ensured a corresponding economic liberalization and an antecedent increase in domestic and foreign private investments, especially in the housing industry. The authors argue that this has inadvertently led an overproduction of housing for high-income earners and less attention to the production of housing for low-income earners the capital city Accra.

In Chap. 8—*Environmental Change, Livelihood Diversification and Local Knowledge in North-Eastern Ghana*—Derbile explores the relationships among environmental change, household livelihoods and local knowledge. One of the criticisms of conventional approaches to development and the environment is the over-reliance on experts trained in “western” science. Increasingly, researchers and policy makers are realizing that the integration of different types of knowledge could enhance a better understanding of human-environment interactions and lead to more informed decisions. Within this context, traditional and local knowledge is gaining increasing recognition. The chapter provides useful insights into the role of local knowledge in the diverse responses of communities and households to environmental change in order to secure their livelihoods.

In the final chapter in this volume, Chap. 9—*Contextual Issues in Health Care Financing in Africa: Drawing on the Ghanaian Experience*—Owusu-Sekyere and

Osumanu adopt a historical methodology to highlight healthcare financing policies in Ghana. They claim that the search for appropriate policy for financing healthcare in Africa in general is far from over. This is particularly so in Ghana despite the introduction of a National Health Insurance Scheme.

Part I
Selected Development Issues in African
States

Chapter 2

Climate, Causation and Society: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Past to the Future

Matthew Hannaford

Abstract Over the last two decades, the causal role of climate in African history has been the subject of renewed debate. In many cases, however, the limitations of extant methodological approaches have contributed to a tendency to view climate as a monocausal factor in past human events, leading to revived criticism of the concept of climatic causation. Similar claims have also surfaced regarding approaches to evaluating the potential impacts of future climate change, where it has been suggested that the predictive hegemony of modelling has left the future of humankind “reduced to climate”, thereby overlooking the human factors that determine the magnitude of its impacts. In the context of urgent present and future African environmental challenges, questions over the concept of causation underline the need for further interdisciplinary research at the climate-society interface. One approach that can contribute to this discourse is assembling well-founded historical perspectives on climate–society interactions through the analytical framework of climate history. Indeed, studying the past is the only way we can examine the effects of and responses to shifts in physical systems. The aim of this paper is to provide an up-to-date starting point for such analyses in an African context. Using selected southern African case studies, previous approaches relating to climate and societal dynamics are first evaluated. Climate history is subsequently posited as a paradigm which is well-placed to deepen knowledge on long-term climate-society interactions, fitting alongside and incorporating key established paradigms such as vulnerability and resilience. Three key areas are highlighted for this challenge: climate reconstruction; understanding past human–climate interaction and vulnerability, and examination of societal resilience to climate change impacts. New research areas are then presented where studying the past can inform consideration of important future challenges, and the paper concludes by calling for the development of African climate histories on various spatial and temporal scales.

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Introduction

The causal role of climate in human history has been a source of long-term debate amongst historians, archaeologists and anthropologists. Over the last two decades, the increasing availability and resolution of palaeoclimate proxy data, offering unprecedented insight into past climates, coupled with concerns over contemporary global climate change, has contributed to resurgence in hypotheses proclaiming the significance of climate in human history (Middleton 2012). The African historiography is no exception to this trend, with some of the most important events in African history being linked to the variability of precipitation in particular (McCann 1999). The absence of coherent methodological approaches for such investigation, however, has promoted renewed criticism. This primarily conforms to suggestions of climate determinism, whereby climate is elevated to the position of a monocausal explanatory factor in past events and the performance of societies. This is conceptually illustrated in the basic input–output model in Fig. 2.1, which depicts climate directly determining societal impacts. Although changes in climate can certainly have significant biophysical consequences, these impacts affect complex socio-ecological systems shaped by the interaction of multiple stressors, as shown in model (c) (Fig. 2.1), meaning human response is strongly non-linear (Endfield 2012). Basing societal impacts primarily on the reconstructed physical aspects of past climate has thus led to misleading conclusions over its human significance (O’Sullivan 2008; Butzer 2012; Livingstone 2012).

Debate over the societal impacts of climate variability is, of course, not confined to the past. Africa is frequently referred to as one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change (Boko et al. 2007). Model outputs project that its warming in this century is very likely to be higher than the global average, with increases in extreme wet and dry seasons projected in most sub-regions (Christensen et al. 2007). While the recent increasing volume and sophistication of model-based climate impact studies has witnessed a significant move beyond the simplistic approach in model (a) in Fig. 2.1, critics argue that our understanding of the causal consequences of climate change for society remains limited (Hulme 2011). Reactions against the dominant methodological discourse have recently emerged, one of which argues that the predictive authority of climate modelling over geography and other environmental and social sciences has left the future of humankind “reduced to climate” (Hulme 2011). Similarly to climate determinism, then, this so-called climate reductionism is suggested to have resulted in an elevated position of climate as a universal predictor and causal variable, and an over-determined future where the biophysical impacts of climate “explain” the performance of future societies.

Owing to the urgency of contemporary environmental challenges and the stated vulnerability of the African continent, the notions of determinism and reductionism across different timescales raise pertinent questions for Africanists working at the climate-society interface. Are past and future views of Africa simply reduced to climate because it is a “known” variable? Are other factors that influence societies disregarded because they are less predictable? Perhaps most importantly, how can

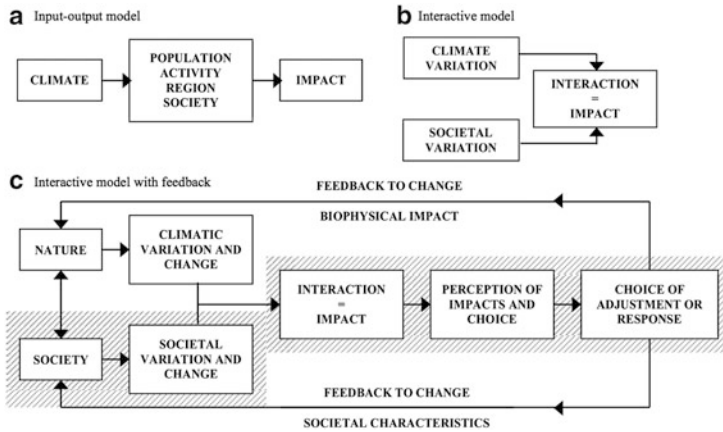


Fig. 2.1 Hierarchy of models of climate-society relationships. *Shading* indicates key research areas relating to societal impacts. Modified after Kates (1985)

geographers, social scientists, historians and others contribute to these discussions alongside model-based descriptions of the future? These are key questions that cut across disciplinary boundaries, and further research on the human aspects of climate change is required to deepen our understanding of these complex interactions (Boko et al. 2007; Hulme 2011). While there exists no universally accepted way of formulating the linkages between human and natural systems, one relatively recent approach that can contribute to this discussion is “climate history” (Ogilvie 2010; Carey 2012). This emergent field seeks to analyse both the past evolution of climate and its relationship with societal dynamics, and is often linked to the wider integrated modelling paradigm relating to historical ecology, vulnerability, and resilience (Holling and Gunderson 2002; Janssen and Ostrom 2006; Crumley 2007). Furthermore, although the combination of contemporary climate change and the rapid post-1950s growth of human societies mean that future impacts are likely to be of unprecedented complexity, examining the past can offer much-needed historical perspectives on linked social and ecological systems (Redman and Kinzig 2003). Indeed, with respect to Africa, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) states that “there are still few detailed and rich compendia of studies on ‘human dimensions’, interactions, adaptation and climate change (of both a historical context, current, and future-scenarios nature)” (Boko et al. 2007).

This chapter therefore aims to examine approaches and research themes regarding the notion of climatic causation in African history, with the intention of providing a framework and starting point for Africanists researching related themes. Thus, the paper will necessarily be broad in scope. A case study approach is adopted, whereby historical examples from southern African history are first evaluated, with particular focus given to the inherent methodological challenges in linking nature and society. As a result of this critique, climate history is posited as