

Book Reviews

Demanding Accountability: Civil-Society Claims and the World Bank Inspection Panel. Edited by Dana Clark, Jonathan Fox and Kay Treacle. *Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc*, 2003. Pp. + 311. £22.95. ISBN 0 7425 3310 7

It is a rare thing indeed when an academic book has me anxiously turning the pages waiting to see what's going to happen next (I do include my own in this, of course!). This might be a slight exaggeration, but there are many components in *Demanding Accountability* that are also found in the best airport novels: rich versus poor; international conspiracy; backroom bargaining; corruption; murder; death threats; and so on. Unfortunately, this is not a novel. It is a well researched and documented account of the real tragedies that follow on from ill-conceived development projects and the stories of ordinary citizens (and some not so ordinary, such as the Dalai Lama) trying to hold the World Bank to account.

The World Bank's Inspection Panel is still relatively unique among international agencies – a citizen-driven accountability mechanism that 'allows local people who are affected by a World Bank-funded project to file a complaint and request an independent investigation into whether the bank complied with its own environmental and social policies' (p.xii). The Bank set these standards after a number of high profile disasters in the 1980s. However, as this book clearly shows, the pressure to meet lending targets still results in some poor lending decisions, badly designed projects, a lack of local participation and eventually, 'development disasters'.

The book presents a range of case studies based on complaints investigated by the Inspection Panel. A number of countries are represented here (Nepal, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Bangladesh, Chile, India, China). Of a total of 28 complaints filed thus far with the Inspection Panel, the nine cases presented here are the only ones that have actually gone through full investigation (three are still pending, including the high profile Chad-Cameroon Pipeline case). Investigation can only proceed if a complaint meets certain criteria (an excellent overview is provided in Box 1.1, p.10). Among other things, the claim must involve two or more people living in the affected area who have been (or believe they will be) harmed by the project; it cannot be retroactive; and can only involve complaints directly involving Bank staff and projects (so no investigations of the behaviour of borrowing governments or other actors).

Each of the cases tells a story, building a picture of what really happens on the ground with development projects, as well as informing the reader of the outcome of Panel investigations. For example, in Nepal, national NGOs had to convince locals to listen to their account of the probable impact of the Arun III Hydroelectric Project, rather than listen to the hard sell of the government, highlighting the difficulty in getting local support for claims. In Singrauli, India, the claimants met with repression and violence, while the Indian government refused the Inspection Panel access for investigation. In Tibet, massive international pressure ensured that the Panel process was completed properly, despite Bank country staff interference (a regular feature in all the case studies), and the loan was cancelled. Despite this, the Chinese government continued on with its controversial resettlement programme, with its own funds, but at least it continues without the Bank's 'stamp of approval'.

Clark *et al.* know what they're talking about. The impressive list of contributors includes international lawyers, environmental and human rights activists and advisors,

distinguished academics and even a founding member of the Inspection Panel. All of this is reason itself to read the book. I fear, however, that the book will find a rather narrow audience in 'development studies' or 'environment studies', while it should instead easily appeal across the social sciences. At the very least, this book makes it clear that the Inspection Panel brings 'participatory development' onto a whole new level: that of international law, a realm usually reserved solely for nation states (p.9). That in itself makes it highly significant and worthy of wider study. This book provides an excellent introduction to this unique mechanism and should find a wide audience among students, academics, practitioners and activists.

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Agriculture and the WTO: Creating a Trading System for Development. Edited by Merlinda D. Ingco and John D. Nash. *Oxford: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2004.* Pp.xvii + 387. £28.95. ISBN 0 8213 5485 X

One of the main outcomes of the GATT Uruguay Round that concluded in the early 1990s was that agriculture, which had by and large been left out of previous rounds of trade negotiations, now firmly became part of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) remit. Multilateral rules would, in principle, now apply and agricultural trade, arguably the sector most distorted by government intervention around the world, would be subject to negotiation within the WTO process of trade liberalisation. However, the fact that agriculture was such a significant issue in the Uruguay Round (and indeed, the stand-off between the main participants was due to their disagreement over agriculture) should not be equated with the liberalisation of trade in that sector. Though there were some attempts to promote reductions in export subsidies and to improve market access, the primary achievement of the Uruguay Round was to bring agriculture under the WTO umbrella. However, with it came ways of converting the disparate means by which governments restricted market access into one overall measure as well as aiming to provide some (albeit limited) degree of liberalisation while not dismantling too hastily the levels of protection that had been in place for many years. Thus, rather than liberalisation, we instead got 'tariffication', 'tariff-rate' quotas, 'out-of-quota' tariffs and so on. To a large extent, it is now only in the current Doha Round that there is the first possible attempt at real liberalisation of agriculture trade, evidenced by the fact that agriculture is (again) probably the most important and politically contentious item on the negotiating table.

However, for trade negotiators or those coming anew to agricultural trade politics, there are a myriad of issues to address. These include not only the methods (and details relating to their application) of the way in which market access is affected via quota administration, export subsidies and so on, but also seemingly rather opaque issues as 'multi-functionality', 'decoupling' and 'special and differential treatment' for developing countries as well as the specific Agreement on Agriculture that arose from the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. Moreover, since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round in the early 1990s, agricultural trade issues have moved on to include biotechnology, the role of food safety covered by the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement and intellectual property rights as well as greater concern on the potential impact on food security on developing countries following trade liberalisation.

Clearly, coming to terms with all these issues that will surface throughout the WTO negotiations is a considerable undertaking for participants and observers of the Doha Round process.

This book however does an admirable job of covering these issues in a comprehensive and clear manner backed up by a wealth of data relating to agricultural protection in general as well as the details relating to specific issues. The book falls within the remit of the World Bank's attempts to promote capacity-building in developing countries and ensure that trade negotiators and policy makers are better armed in order to participate more fully in the trade negotiating process although the material covered in the book will certainly have broader appeal. In essence, the book can be divided into two parts. The first gives a snapshot of where we are at present with Chapters 1 to 6 providing details of the GATT Uruguay Round Agreement as it relates to agriculture, export competition policies, instruments that affect market access, quota administration and domestic support instruments. Chapters 7 to 15 cover a range of newly-emerging issues as well as highlighting recent work that relates to concerns about the outcome of the trade liberalisation process. Specifically, the topic coverage includes food security, the distributional effects of reform, adverse impacts of liberalisation on developing countries, multi-functionality, food safety policies, biotechnology, global intellectual property rights, rules for special and differential treatment for developing countries, and special trade arrangements to improve market access. The book concludes with two appendices, the first providing some detail on the OECD policy evaluation matrix which provides an insight into how the impact of agricultural policies are assessed, the second appendix re-producing the Agreement on Agriculture that forms the basis for discussions on agricultural trade in the WTO.

The book is highly recommended. Given the complexity of the issues that are now part and parcel of the debate on agricultural trade, the material presented here provides a means of overcoming what would otherwise be a considerable barrier to entry in understanding fully the range of issues to be addressed by the WTO negotiations on agricultural trade and the reform process. The book has a development angle to it with particular attention paid to agricultural trade issues as they relate to, or impact on, developing countries. The chapters are invariably well-written and presented and provide a large amount of data pertaining to specific issues. The book also provides a comprehensive bibliography of current research as well as a listing of links to online resources. As such, it will be an invaluable reference to policy makers as well as those involved (either in an official or research capacity) in ascertaining the key issues and likely impact of liberalising agricultural trade in the ongoing Doha Round.

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Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador. Edited by Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford. *Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press*, 2004. Pp.ix + 326. \$54.95 and \$22.95. ISBN 0 8229 4224 0 and 5838 4

As an empirical sociologist I am really pleased that this collection exists. This series of articles makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about a region we think we know a lot about. However, as the editors suggest in their introduction, the locus of attention thus far tends to have been (for obvious reasons) dominated by structural

analyses of the political and social conflict that has ravaged the region for much of the last century. They suggest that consequently analyses have 'been pitched at a high level of generalisation and abstraction with little attention given to local and regional differences within El Salvador' (p.3). Whilst these more structural approaches have been of critical importance in the Salvadoran context, here we have a collection largely based on detailed, ethnographic research that I at least, in the UK, do not regularly see coming out of El Salvador (Jenny Pearce's excellent 1986 study notwithstanding).

At first glance, however, this book does little to distinguish itself from that which they seek to move beyond. The title *Landscapes of Struggle* sounds like it is another presentation of the extreme poverty and political repression suffered by the Salvadoran people. No bad thing in itself, but it has been done before. In terms of shelf appeal, it is also a shame about the drunken cowpat someone deemed fit to put on the cover. Some of the individual chapter titles do not exactly fill the potential reader with excitement either. But, to invoke the old cliché, don't judge this book by its cover, or its contents by the titles for that matter.

For me, what makes this collection stand out from the crowd is the emphasis placed on specifics, on nuance, on complexity, and of course the fact that it is firmly rooted in empirical and archival research. What, for those with an interest in the region, are familiar stories of conflict, elites versus peasantry and so on, become greatly enriched by grounded knowledge of the difference and complexity that permeate local histories and experiences. Nevertheless, this collection does not fall into the 'postmodern' trap of becoming so bogged down in diversity that the bigger picture is completely obscured. Here the authors manage to make the essential connections between the micro and the macro, between agency and structure, that lead to a much more holistic, nuanced understanding of El Salvador as a country inhabited by people with lives, loves, hates and histories. Speaking of history, this book also pays attention to the important links between history and anthropology. As the editors point out, '[n]o well-trained contemporary anthropologist should undertake a study of El Salvador without delving heavily into the historical literature; no contemporary historian, working primarily from archives, should hazard interpretations without at least a basic acquaintance with the results of sociological and anthropological research' (p.7). Indeed, it is these explorations of the inter-relationships between past and present and between agency and structure that are the particulars strengths of this work.

In terms of the specific contents, the book is divided into three sections. The first has an historical focus, with a series of five articles examining aspects of Salvadoran history from the perspective of differing social actors spanning the course of a century. Lauria-Santiago begins with an analysis of the revolt of the indigenous population of Dolores Izalco in the late nineteenth century in which he argues that 'conflicts over land tenure and the privatisation process in El Salvador have long been misunderstood' (p.18). In this analysis he considers the internal dynamics of the local community and their complex political relationships with external forces which eventually led to the demise of Dolores as an indigenous community. Also in this section, Acuña Ortega focuses on the socio-economic and political importance of the urban 'middle sectors' in a society often characterised as being starkly polarised between the elites and the peasantry. Griffith and Gates pose the question of how military regimes seek support or legitimacy from society other than by way of violent repression. In doing so they present a complex account of the alliances forged between the military and urban industrial workers, and, particularly interestingly for me

perhaps, ‘the role that gendered labour reforms played in solidifying the alliance’ (p.71).

Section two then focuses on the civil war itself (1980–92) and its immediate aftermath. Continuing the micro/agency theme of the book, this section aims to explore the myriad of local experiences of Salvadorans during this period. Of particular interest was Silber’s chapter ‘Not Revolutionary Enough? Community Rebuilding in Postwar Chalatenango’, which, for me, built on Pearce’s earlier study in the region. Silber focuses on the lives of repatriated people in Chalatenango involved in postwar reconstruction. Through her rich research, she explores the complex and often problematic relationships between rural people and NGO-led development. I like her gendered focus on individual narratives and conflicting local discourses. She found that NGO-led development projects ‘blame’ rural residents – and particularly women, ‘who are held responsible for alternative models of development’ (p.168) – in a no-win situation, for simultaneously “losing” their revolutionary identity and “forgetting” the past, the war, and their struggle’ (p.168), and for ‘failing in micro-enterprise because they do not have sufficient entrepreneurial capabilities or a “culture of credit”’ (p.168). For anyone interested in issues of power and complexity within participatory, grass roots development, this chapter is certainly well worth reading.

The final section, entitled ‘Culture and Ideology in Contemporary El Salvador’, covers issues of ethnopolitics, identity, violence, and the contradictory impacts of migration from and remittances back to the country. In a region that has by no means escaped its violent past, Moodie’s chapter on ‘Blood and Meaning in Postwar San Salvador’ is fascinating and enlightening. It is also beautifully written, effectively walking the linguistic tightrope between the literary and academic conventions.

All in all, this could admittedly be seen as being fairly specialist stuff that sometimes becomes a bit of a trawl through the detail, but I defend it for being both specialist and detailed – for presenting solid scholarly academic research about El Salvador in ways that develop a much richer, more sophisticated picture of such an interesting nation.

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Development Projects for a New Millennium. By Anil Hira and Trevor Parfitt
Westport CT: Praeger, 2004. Pp.xii + 2004. £16.99. ISBN 0 275 97502 9 and 97503 7

This is an interesting and stimulating book for those concerned with recent trends in development and their implications for aid projects. The title is rather misleading because the book is essentially a postmodernist discourse on development issues and their relation to aid-funded projects rather than a book about planning or managing projects in general. Those looking for practical guidance on techniques and approaches to project planning and management will not find much in terms of ‘what to do’, but they will find many pertinent comments on relevant issues and useful critiques of existing practices.

There are seven chapters, each ‘deconstructing’ a particular set of issues. Chapter 1 discusses trends in aid in the Post-Cold War era, an early indication that the book is actually concerned with aid and the influence of donors as much as it is with projects. It is curious that a book, in many respects critical of the influence and policies of aid donors and the predominance of their ideas, is itself dominated by the discussion of

donor policies and aid projects. Development projects funded by developing country governments without aid are not mentioned, although for many countries they may be larger both in number and in terms of funding.

There is a useful exposition of the reasons for the short-termism of donors and the well-known political motivations that influences the way aid is allocated as well as a critical introduction to the expanding role of NGOs and civil society. Some of the statistics used are rather dated and some points are overstated, a common feature throughout the book. For example, the absence of 'training local managers' (p.19) and 'meaningful evaluation' (p.20) may be relevant issues but cannot be regarded as either universal or unrecognised.

Chapter 2 relates the project approach to issues of bureaucratic control, particularly the problem that over-specification of project activities can lead to inflexibility in project management. A critical review of problem trees and logframes is included and current ideas about process projects are traced to Rondinelli's view of projects as development experiments. The discussion is set in the context of an analysis of the recent emphasis on Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPS) and a short critical assessment of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

Chapter 3 concerns sustainable development and the environment, including a helpful introduction to sustainable livelihoods approaches. The authors are sceptical about the accuracy of environmental valuation and the complexity of environmental impact assessment, but much of the discussion tends to concentrate on global issues and the outcomes of international conferences rather than the specifics of practice at the project level.

Chapter 4 concerns organisational reform including a reminder (referring to the World Bank and the IMF) that 'the pure irony of the situation is that these change agents never apply the same threats of reforming for accountability, transparency and participation to themselves as they impose on developing governments' (p.91). It provides a valuable critique of new public management and the implications of contracting out for sustainability. This is followed by a critical examination of the meaning and implications of decentralisation. The chapter concludes with a wish-list for international agencies preceded by assertion of an 'almost complete lack of information sharing' by development agencies. Are the authors unaware of the information available from their websites? The level of transparency of the international agencies may be an issue, but the extent to which they do make information freely available should be recognised.

Chapter 5 concerns participation and empowerment. The discussion is strongly pro-participation, but recognises many of the associated problems. Participation is seen as a process rather than a set of techniques but this raises the question of how to start and how to determine whether the results are valid. The problem of 'PRA fatigue' is mentioned but the issue of the opportunity cost of time taken in participation and whether this is offset by real benefits to stakeholders is given insufficient attention. The importance of relevant training is emphasised along with the idea of 'learning organisations' with effective feedback processes, flexible budgets and downward accountability.

Gender issues are considered next, distinguishing between 'Women in Development' and 'Gender and Development' perspectives. The extent to which gender perspectives are unduly influenced by developed country women and/or women from elite developing country backgrounds is discussed as is the thorny issue of the compatibility of contemporary views on gender with indigenous cultures. The authors distinguish between abuses of fundamental human rights, on which external challenge

to existing practices is legitimate, and other issues needing a flexible approach, responsive to the local cultural context. Types of projects likely to be very gender-sensitive are identified (p.131) but the extent to which projects (rather than policies or the political process) are the right vehicles for tackling gender issues is not really discussed. The extent to which gender issues are also concerned with men is not given sufficient attention. The need to transform the role and attitudes of men only appears at the end of the chapter in a quotation from Kate Young (p.137).

The final chapter concerns what the authors describe as evaluation. Unfortunately, they do not distinguish between appraisal and evaluation and so it is not clear when they are referring to ex-ante or ex-post analysis. The discussion of cost benefit analysis relies too much on literature from the 1970s and does not recognise the contribution of more recent literature to resolving practical questions. Too many issues are covered in a short space (pp.141–7) with a resultant lack of clarity. There is evidence of confusion between economic and financial aspects, a very narrow understanding of the time preference concept underlying discounting and a failure to appreciate the distinction between the treatment of risk and uncertainty. The discussion of the treatment of income distribution shows no awareness of literature since the weighting approaches of the 1970s. The tendency to overstate a legitimate case without proper regard to the evidence is again observed in ‘we do not see any evidence of serious project evaluation’ (p.142) and ‘there is almost no documentation of the long-term effects of projects!’ (p.159). The authors do not appear to be aware of an FAO study reviewing the performance of 70 agricultural projects (FAO Investment Centre Technical Paper No.6, Rome 1989), or of similar work undertaken by the World Bank. Despite these weaknesses some valuable points are made about the independence of evaluators and potential contradictions between results based and experimental approaches. Ultimately, the conclusions about the need for both quantitative and participatory approaches (p.160) are balanced and sensible. What is missing is recognition that different emphases may be appropriate for different types and scales of project and that available tools of analysis should be used in an intelligent and selective way bearing in mind many of the issues that the authors rightly identify.

In conclusion this is an interesting but flawed contribution to the literature, useful for ideas but lacking in rigour, particularly in the use of evidence.

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Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World.

United Nations Development Programme. *New York: United Nations Development Programme and Oxford University Press*, 2004. Pp.384. \$22.95. ISBN 0 19 522146 X

This fourteenth edition of the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) annual Human Development Report (HDR) is the first ever devoted to the issue of culture, defined here as including ‘ethnicity, religion and language’. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Director of the UNDP and lead author of every HDR since 1995, and her fellow authors have consulted a wide variety of academics, including Will Kymlicka, Brendan O’Leary and Nobel-prize winning economist Amartya Sen. The report is, as always, a handsome and well-organised piece of work, with various boxes interspersed throughout the text giving detailed information about cultural diversity in Algeria, Egypt, Guatemala, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and the

Solomon Islands, among others. The volume also contains special contributions from Nobel Peace Prize winners Shirin Ebadi, John Hume and Nelson Mandela, along with the standard Human Development Indicators in the latter half of the book.

On the cover of the report the authors make their case that ‘cultural liberty,’ ‘cultural freedoms,’ ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ should be promoted ‘so that all people can choose to speak their language, practice their religion, and participate in shaping their culture – so that all people can choose to be who they are’. These themes continue inside the report, where the authors argue across five chapters that states must ‘recognize and respect cultural difference’ (p.11) and allow people to maintain ‘multiple and complementary identities’ (p.105). In the introductory chapter the authors attempt to define culture by arguing that it is not necessarily the same thing as tradition and that it is inherently dynamic rather than timeless and stable; they also claim that cultural diversity is merely a means to an end rather than a goal in and of itself.

After Chapter 1’s exposition – where Sen’s influence is most obvious in the philosophical discussions of ‘identity, community and freedom’ – the authors examine various threats to cultural diversity in Chapters 2, 4 and 5. In Chapter 2, entitled ‘Challenges for Cultural Liberty’, they examine two aspects of cultural exclusion, namely living mode exclusion and participation exclusion, which could also be termed direct and indirect cultural discrimination. It is here that the authors dispel a good variety of myths about culture, for instance that ‘ethnically diverse countries are less able to develop’ (most recently propagated by the economists William Easterly and Ross Levine in a 1997 paper) as well as the cultural determinism of Samuel Huntington, Max Weber and others. Chapter 4 also examines challenges to cultural diversity, but rather from ‘coercive movements for cultural domination’, especially xenophobic, racist and discriminatory political parties. The authors recommend four strategies for dealing with such parties, namely maintaining normal democratic activity while also prosecuting hate crimes, monitoring school curricula and promoting community-based reconciliation organisations. Finally, Chapter 5 deals with globalisation and the threats it poses to cultural diversity; the authors claim that globalisation need not destroy individual cultures, but can actually increase cultural diversity if handled well.

Chapter 3 forms the heart of the HDR as it examines how countries can actively ‘build multicultural democracies’, and it is here where the authors run into problems. Indeed, a text by President Hamid Karzai about language policies in Afghanistan demonstrates how utopian many of the authors’ proposals can be. In a state whose budget is only one eighth the size of that of the city of Chicago, and whose effective control extends to a small fraction of its territory, it is hard to see how Karzai will find the money or power to ‘train more teachers and print more books’ (p.64) to teach children in Nuristani, Pamiri or Pashai. While Afghanistan may appear to be a worst-case scenario, similar problems of funding for minority languages and cultures arise across the developing world – especially among the indigenous peoples the HDR mentions so often throughout the report. Furthermore, the HDR authors seem to contradict themselves by arguing for multicultural language policies whilst also claiming that, since ‘most languages are related’ (p.62), many of these dialects could be standardised into a core language. However, it is very hard to claim that linguists could easily tell native speakers of Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Luchiga, Lunyankole, Luyoro or Lutoro in Burundi, Rwanda and south-western Uganda that their languages are all one and the same, henceforth to be called ‘Western Interlacustrine’. What about the cultural

attachments these peoples have to their languages? Is the goal of the UNDP to therefore force these languages into extinction, something completely contradictory to the purported goals of the HDR? If not, then what provisions are to be made to preserve these languages while 'Western Interlacustrine' is taught in schools? None of these questions are answered.

This is merely one example of how simple ideas of promoting multicultural policies lead to very complex scenarios. Indeed, while no one could possibly argue with the HDR's goals of cultural diversity and freedom, the authors' inability to comprehend the full positive and negative ramifications of their proposals makes for a frustrating read. Nonetheless, the fact that the UNDP considers cultural diversity important enough to be the theme for this year's HDR is a step in the right direction. One can only hope that the next time the UNDP or other practitioners take up this theme that they deal with it in a more comprehensive manner.

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