

Review of the book: Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring¹²

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The volume titled "Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring" is part of the Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development book series, published in 2022. The purpose of this book series is to assist policymakers by providing a platform for international and African experts and researchers to publish their findings in the fields of politics, economics, social issues, as well as environmental and energy topics.

This particular volume offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the neoliberal transformations affecting the peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa. The authors conducted in-depth research in the region to explore the effects of capital investment and neoliberal economic policies on local agricultural communities. The main theme of the book is the penetration of capital into peasant economies in Southern and Eastern Africa and the resulting socio-economic transformations. The authors provide a thorough explanation of how neoliberal reforms have reshaped local economies and social structures, focusing on changes in land ownership, agricultural production methods, and the lifestyles of peasant communities. Through case studies, Mazwi, Mudimu, and Helliker demonstrate how neoliberal policies have strengthened capitalist interests at the expense of peasant economies. Their analyses shed light on the impacts of land privatization, marketization of agricultural products, and reductions in state support. They reveal how the penetration of capital leaves local farmers vulnerable, as they lose their land and livelihoods.

One of the book's key findings is that neoliberal transformations have not only brought about economic changes but have also resulted in deep social changes. The authors highlight how traditional community structures have weakened and, in many cases, contributed to growing inequalities.

The strength of the book lies in its detailed empirical data collection and thorough analysis. The authors meticulously document the changes that have taken place in the region, offering a comprehensive picture of the peasantry's situation. Case studies provide specific examples to illustrate the theoretical findings, offering insights into how local economies and societies are being transformed by global capital, as well as the

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² Mazwi, Freedom, Kirk Helliker & George Tonderai Mudimu: Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring. Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development. Springer, 2022. ISBN: ISBN 978-3-030-89823-6. ISBN: ISBN 978-3-030-89824-3 (eBook).

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challenges faced by peasant communities during this process. The authors' research and analysis represent a valuable contribution to the academic literature on the subject. This volume is an essential read for professionals, researchers, and educators interested in agricultural transformations in Southern and Eastern Africa.

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter I introduces the book's subject and deals with theoretical and practical approaches to the effects of capitalist development in the region. It raises several key questions about the historical and economic role of the peasantry in the region. It discusses how capitalist economics began gradually penetrating rural areas in Southern and Eastern African countries since colonialism. The economic systems introduced by colonial powers fundamentally transformed local economic structures, and the globalizing market economy gradually attracted more local actors. This capitalist penetration had a major impact on the rural population, particularly smallholders and subsistence farmers. The chapter shows how traditional agricultural production was transformed by market demands and discusses the social, political, and economic consequences of this shift. The emergence of a market-oriented economy not only reshaped production structures but also reorganized social hierarchies and relationships. The chapter provides theoretical frameworks for examining capitalist penetration, drawing on Marxist, postcolonial, and globalization theories that address the transformation of agriculture in Southern and Eastern Africa. These theories emphasize that capitalism is not merely an economic system but also deeply transforms social and political relations. Capitalist penetration was not without conflict, and the chapter discusses how the relationship between the peasantry and capital was often fraught with conflict, though cooperation could also emerge in certain cases. This relationship is complex and region-specific.

Chapter I lays the foundation for the subsequent chapters of the book, which provide a deeper analysis of different aspects of capitalist penetration and its impact on the lives of local smallholders and rural farmers in the region.

The second part of the book delves deeper into the specific economic, social, and political effects, as well as the responses of rural economies to neoliberal restructuring in different parts of the region. Through case studies, the authors examine changes and current situations in Sub-Saharan African countries. They emphasize that land is the foundation of livelihood for the local population, and consequently, land privatization processes linked to the influx of large capital have severely disadvantaged the rural population and the smallholder class. In the case of Uganda, land reforms since the 1980s have taken place under the banner of "land acquisition for development," raising questions about what development goals are served by measures that involve the state confiscating land ownership rights from rural farmers. This chapter discusses the history of capitalist development in South Africa's agricultural sector, where large capitalist farms gradually displaced smaller peasant farms during the colonial period. It shows how the apartheid regime transformed land relations and created a dual economy, consisting of large-scale, white-owned farms and a landless local peasant class. The analysis also covers the failure of land reforms and the agricultural crisis. Using the

example of Namibia's land reform, the authors clarify that land does not guarantee prosperity, and when a state does not view it as a collective resource, its negative consequences are felt in rural and communal areas.

Chapter III reviews various agricultural policies resulting from the neoliberal process. The chapters demonstrate that the struggle for land, mostly between foreign investors and the local population, has led to increased food insecurity in both Malawi and Zimbabwe. The 2002 land reform in Malawi saw the state implementing strict rules to prevent violent land seizures while supporting land expropriation by foreign investors. In Zimbabwe, the influx of foreign investors led to increased food exports, but this process severely weakened the role and food security of rural, grain-producing households. The authors revisit neoliberal transformations in Zimbabwe in the final chapter of Part IV, focusing on the impact of large capital in the tobacco industry. Unlike other regions, the situation of small-scale Zimbabwean tobacco farmers is somewhat exceptional, as the dominance of white commercial farmers in the region seems to have been challenged by the influx of large capital. Over time, local smallholders became the dominant class in tobacco farming, but this transformation exposed them to the global market, causing periodic income disruptions due to market fluctuations.

The situation of the Zambian smallholder class did not improve either, as a result of neoliberal restructuring. One of the chapters in Part II presents a case study from Chibombo, Zambia, showing how neoliberalization, through structural adjustment programs such as opening up farms to direct capital, deregulating prices, and privatization, weakened the smallholder system.

The next chapter discusses the impact of colonial agricultural policies and structural adjustment programs on Kenyan farmers. It analyses the effects of neoliberal processes and highlights how the political system, rural development challenges, and climate change have contributed to the marginalization of smallholders.

In the fourth part of the book, the analysis of the impact of neoliberal economic restructuring on rural smallholders continues. The first chapter focuses on processes in Mozambique, detailing case studies to show that, despite efforts to integrate smallholders into rural development processes, the smallholder class continues to face alienation and exclusion. Similar processes occurred in the Kingdom of Eswatini, where the introduction of irrigation farming in the 1990s was considered a success, yet overall food security declined. The authors show how the neoliberal reforms supporting sugarcane production, which began in the 2000s, affected rural smallholders and subsistence farmers. Neoliberalism in Eswatini aimed to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial farming, with the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty. However, the focus shifted to export products, causing a decline in grain production and significant disadvantages for the rural smallholder class. The chapter provides an overview of the Kingdom's sugar industry, the effects of neoliberal reforms on this sector, and offers recommendations for further detailed analysis of the links between neoliberalism and the pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization, and stability).

The book provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of the appearance of big



capital in post-apartheid Africa and the evolving situation of African rural landowners, small-scale farmers, and subsistence agriculture. It presents various interpretations of the concept of neoliberalism and supports the theories that, while the influx of big capital into Africa has created jobs and achieved development goals, it has nonetheless led to the marginalization of the rural local population, backed by concrete case studies. The book serves as a valuable study for all economic, political, and social science professionals and researchers who focus on post-apartheid Africa's development and the socio-economic impacts of the influx of big capital.