

Rural Transformation in Tropical Africa, D Rimmer (ed), Belhaven Press/Printer, London, 1988 (177p, price and ISBN not stated).

On the whole the book is very informative.

I have some reservations, but these could be misleading as I am unsure of who the target readership is. First the lack of a clear definition of rural transformation in the various papers. This shortcoming makes it difficult to follow some discussions and a clear definition would assist the reader to focus and digest the information presented.

Second, the lack of an in-depth analysis of the topic. Most papers tend to provide facts and information. An in depth analysis of some factors would have been more stimulating and would have promoted understanding of the issues in rural transformation, for example, an historical background would have put some of the issues and constraints into perspective; as would a discussion of the role of extraneous factors such as drought, the world recession, the politics of reconciliation, reliance on donor aid tied to capital equipment and technical expertise/expatriates, the process of industrialisation, the effects of the mass media, a lack of education on the part of policy makers, implementers and recipients, cultural inequalities, etc.

Third, rural transformation is said to be different from rural development, but I had difficulty in identifying the major differences between the two concepts. However, having said this, rural transformation appears to call for adaption socially, politically, economically and culturally. According to who the target readership is, recommendations for ways in which this adaptation could be encaused could have been given by each author.

Fourth, I wonder if the various authors, as academics suffer from what Chambers has called "The Rural Tourist Syndrome", ie people who do not reside in rural areas but visit them to carry out studies and prescribe solutions to problems. There is a 'them and us' gap. Solutions and prescriptions suitable for urban areas differ from those of rural areas both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Fifth, I would have appreciated the inclusion of a chapter on the human resource development necessary to effect social, economic, political and cultural change. Transformation takes place in people who are the active participants. Human resource development should be aimed at policy makers, donors, change agents and consumers. They must be prepared for technological change through education.

I have enjoyed reading this publication and would recommend it to

students of economics, adult education and rural development, with my views taken into consideration.

Reviewed by E Matenga, Masters in Adult Education Student, University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

Reference

Chambers R (1983) *Rural Development: Putting the last first*, Longman, London.

Urban Inequality Under Socialism: Case Studies from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, David M. Smith, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Although written before the fall and ultimate demise of state socialism in much of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union _ indeed before the political restructuring of that entire region _ this book provides a useful and important reference in helping students of Geography and Urban Studies better understand the nature and characteristics of urban areas rarely studied by Western scholars. Comprehensive, concisely written and complete with detailed maps of many of the study areas, it relies primarily on geographical perspective. Drawing on secondary research sources (including some by the author) of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the bulk of the book is devoted to the Soviet and Polish city case studies. With a focus on the spatial distribution of indicators of inequality, it is strangely prophetic of the events which have transpired in the two years since the book was published. Particularly haunting is the concluding paragraph of the book, referring to the case of Poland: "the disaffection of the masses has at least some of its origin in the inequality of urban life..."

Nonetheless, the changing geopolitical realities of the region do not by any means render the book irrelevant or even out of date. As students of urbanism are well aware, the built form of any city tends to be very enduring. In this way, just as the socialist cities of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union inherited an urban form from the previous capitalist era, so will the emergent regimes _ however they eventually define themselves - inherit certain physical realities from the socialist period.

With the collapse, both literal and symbolic, of the barriers dividing East and West, what the author describes as the "relative inaccessibility of some of the countries concerned" along with the "difficulty which Western scholars and teachers often have in dealing with socialism dispassionately and objectively if at all" may dissolve as well.