

Book Review: Africa Toward 2030: Challenges for Development Policy

by blog admin

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*Combining studies of demography, climate change, technology, political development, and global governance frameworks, this book highlights the major underlying determinants of change in the African context and key uncertainties about the continent's future development prospects. **Sasha Jespersen** believes this collection will be of primary interest to graduate students and academics researching development in the region.*



Africa Toward 2030: Challenges for Development Policy. Erik Lundsgaarde. Palgrave Macmillan. December 2011.

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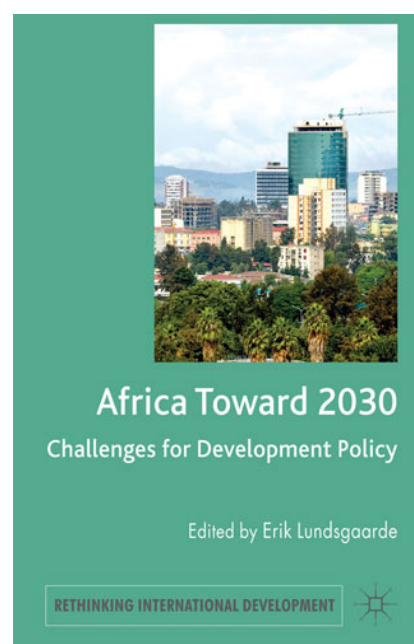
This collection ambitiously seeks to predict long-term trends on the African continent for the benefit of European development policy. The book's significance is currently enhanced in light of new discussions around future development frameworks as replacements for the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. As European donors have reiterated their commitment to the continent, this collection provides pertinent insights into key trends, opportunities and challenges that may affect Africa through to 2030.

In their chapter on climate change, [Natasha Grist](#) and [Chinwe Ifejika Speranza](#), consider how adverse and unpredictable weather will affect the continent and its development. Both contributors acknowledge that whilst "climate change threatens future development", it can also "undermine many development gains experienced already" (p. 105). This is particularly important for food and water security as many African economies depend on rain fed agriculture.

Grist and Speranza map probable changes brought about by climate change, focusing primarily on regional temperature and rainfall fluctuations. They point to the need for political will, as well as regional cooperation and funding for climate initiatives. This point resonates with arguments made in the other thematic chapters, and creates an interesting paradox for European engagement. The uncertainty of coming decades suggests that development assistance should build capacity to address the wide range of potential challenges the continent faces. However, in order to effectively influence policy there needs to be some guidance on where to focus energy.

The thematic chapters do add some specificity. In relation to climate change, Grist and Speranza deepen their analysis by honing in on several key areas like biodiversity and ecosystems, food security, health and the water sector. For example, as climatic zones shift, new areas will become tropical, bringing new infestations of malaria to areas with no built-in resistance. Increased desertification can increase the risk of airborne disease, and flooding can contribute to cholera outbreaks.

Each chapter acknowledges that change does not occur in a vacuum; and the various affected industries, resources and ecosystems, are interactive and therefore produce additional consequences. These consequences are considered in the final chapters of the book, where the editor pitches four possible scenarios for African development and the notes implications this has for European development policy.



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The scenarios are created by juxtaposing a spectrum of international engagement, from extensive and cooperative to selective and competitive, with a spectrum of national governance, from low to high capacity.

The scenarios give four broad possibilities which inevitably only capture part of the picture. Reflecting back on the past from 2030 presents a rather simplistic picture of the potential changes that the continent may face. Despite this, the scenarios present valid warnings and opportunities for donors. For example, the book's editor [Erik Lundsgaarde](#) presents the real possibility that economic pressures within Europe could alter engagement with Africa, shifting support from continental organisations that could produce 'a continent in bloom', to bilateral aid to countries where positive results are easier to demonstrate, creating 'islands of strength' in a sea of struggling countries.

The chapter on scenarios seems misplaced. Although it draws on some of the issues raised in the thematic chapters, the focus on domestic governance and international engagement adds a completely new dimension. However, the two strands are brought together in the final chapter, which explores implications for European development policy. Recommendations are made on development priorities, organisational reform and global governance that draw on both analyses. Although the future projections are difficult to synthesise, given their complexity and uncertainty, it would have been good to have a more integrated discussion of future trajectories on the African continent.

While the projections are primarily directed at policymakers, this book is also an important read for development scholars and Africanists to consider what lies ahead in the coming decades. While any future projections can only provide speculative scenarios, the detailed research undertaken by the contributors ensures that the projections are based on reliable data. Development studies undergraduates, particularly those interested in careers in development policy, will find this an interesting read. However, it will be of primary interest to graduate students and academics researching development on the continent.

Sasha Jesperson is a PhD candidate in the Government Department at the LSE. Her research focuses on the intersection of security and development in post-conflict reconstruction, and human security, comparing Sierra Leone and Bosnia. Previously, she worked with Amnesty International, both at the International Secretariat and the Australian section on a range of human rights issues, but particularly focused on human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations. [Read more reviews by Sasha.](#)