

Book Review: Infrastructure in Africa: Lessons for Future Development edited by Mthuli Ncube and Charles Leyeka Lufumpa

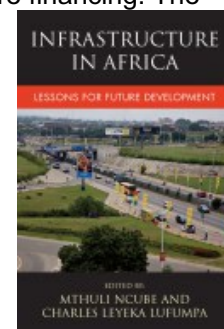
Emmanuel Zwanbin says this book is a must-read for policymakers, academics and researchers on Africa's infrastructure development issues.

Ncube and Lufumpa's book *Infrastructure in Africa: Lessons for Future Development* offers an in-depth information on the state of infrastructure in Africa as a fragmented sector in need of harmonisation. With commanding statistical data, the authors argued that cooperation and coordination will enhance infrastructure integration and consequently better service delivery, economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. It further contends that physical infrastructure is not as much challenged as the need to strengthen Africa's institutional framework. The book is one of the finest, most comprehensive and comparative policy roadmap for infrastructure development in Africa.

The book is broadly divided into five sections comprising of sixteen chapters. The central thesis of the work underscores the importance of integrated infrastructure that will enhance economic growth and poverty reduction. It appeals for the formulation of policy instruments, regulatory framework and innovative infrastructure financing. The use of the African Infrastructure Development Index provided a comprehensive and comparative information on the levels of infrastructure development across the continent. Africa's infrastructure agenda must be tailored to boost economic growth and poverty alleviation. Therefore, to deal the challenges associated with infrastructure, efficient spending, enlarged regional approach to infrastructure investment and, formulating and strengthening regulatory framework will be necessary to provide the requisite business enabling an environment for investment (90-91).

The second and third parts of the work set the stage for the harmonisation and interconnectivity of infrastructure in the continent. It argues that integrated infrastructure will facilitate trade, productivity, labour mobility, free flow of information, financial transfers and improvement of health and well-being of the African people. For sustenance, the traditional funding mechanism must be strengthened through a robust tax reform and the incorporation new innovations; through different Public-private partnership models (482-483). Local currency bonds, commodity-linked-bonds, sovereign external bonds, diaspora bonds, private equity funds and sovereign wealth funds are strategic innovations that can supplement the traditional funding methods. The African Development Bank as shown through the book plays an active role in supporting several sectors as well as policy formulation like the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Fund, Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa and Africa Infrastructure Knowledge Program (494-502).

Lastly, sections four and five underpins the importance of infrastructure financing and the interplay of the African political economy in the integration of infrastructure. It stressed the importance of the Africa50 Fund initiative for private financing mobilisation to cushion the infrastructure investment gap. It is envisioned the Africa50 Fund to deliver on the African Union initiative on the Program for Infrastructure (PIDA). fundamentally, the Africa50 Fund initiative is expected to cushion the financial gap worth US\$ 150 billion occasioned by the shortfall in infrastructure investment through a potential group of investors (637). The critical driver for economic resilience for sustainable economic development, they contended is deliberate infrastructure development. To resolve the issue of governance, the authors recommended the establishment of institutional arrangement pattern in form of sub-regional financing banks and transnational body for coordination.



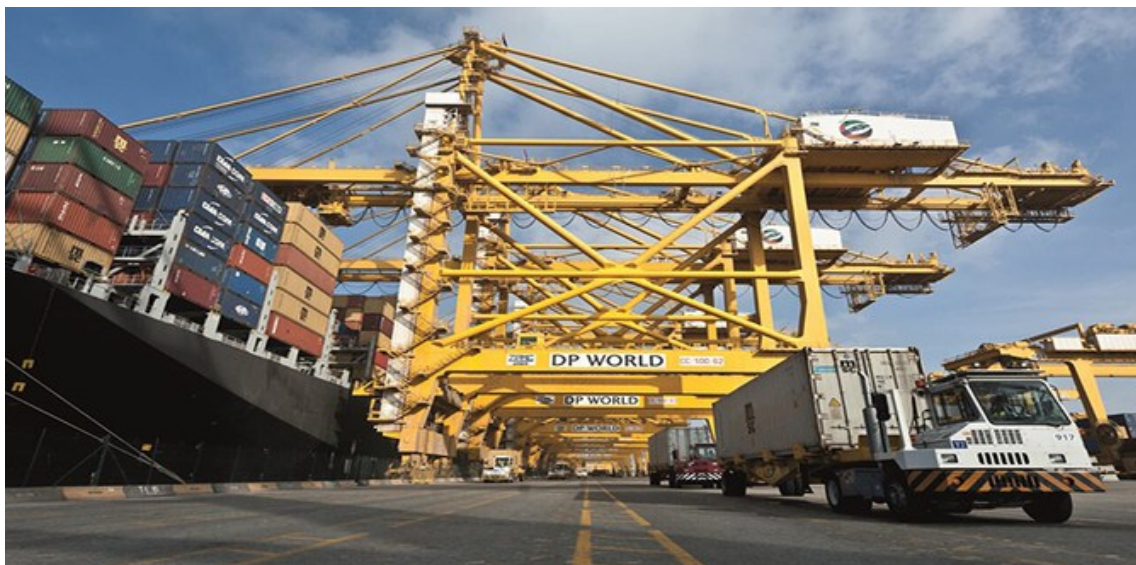


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Largely, the strength of the book lies in the use of meta-analytic approach demonstrated through quantitative and statistical analysis of the state of infrastructure in Africa while making reflections on relevant cases. The work swings between historical, contemporary and statistical accounts of the progression in Africa's infrastructure development. It is an evidence-based work, presented in a simple language; persuasive and appealing to both academics and laymen. *Infrastructure in Africa: Lessons for Future Development* is one of the finest, most comprehensive roadmap in the study infrastructure in Africa. This book provides a detailed account of the challenges and constraints of infrastructure in Africa. The other strength of the book is the use of an in-depth assessment style to examine the condition of infrastructure in Africa and providing the requisite solutions to it.

However, some inconsistencies were observed. For instance, in p. 522 paragraph. one and p. 645 paragraph. 2 the authors claimed that there are 15 and 16 landlocked countries in Africa respectively. In addition, most of the data presented in the book at the time publication in 2017 are outdated. In p. 197, paragraph one, the authors reported that the Mtwara-Dar es Salaam pipeline will be commissioned in 2014, which is retrospective for a 2017 publication. Another concern is that topics on infrastructure sectors clustered severally under different chapters making it fragmented and disjointed. Take, for example, the Africa50 Fund was explained in pp. 603-604 and later 628-637. For an edited book, the organisation lacks sequence making it very difficult to take hold of a subject matter without reading the entire book.

In conclusion, not minding the little misgivings as noted, this book is a must-read for policymakers, academics and researchers on Africa's infrastructure development issues. The book offers an alternative to the over theorised perspectives by launching a consensus between theoreticians and practitioners. It is a hands-on manual that provides the needed solution for the many socioeconomic quagmires of the continent. In the future, readers will be interested in seeing the writers include news trend in African development such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and the standard gauge railway project expected to traverse Kenya to Uganda and Rwanda.

[Infrastructure in Africa: Lessons for Future Development.](#) Mthuli Ncube and Charles Leyeka Lufumpa (eds). Policy Press. 2017.

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