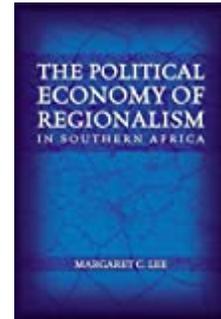




Margaret C. Lee. *The Political Economy of Regionalism in Southern Africa.* Cape Town and Boulder: UCT Press and Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003. xiv + 314 pp. No price listed (cloth), ISBN 978-1-58826-224-0.



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Southern African Regionalism Revisited

Margaret Lee's volume is a welcome update to her 1989 work *SADCC: The Political Economy of Development in Southern Africa*.^[1] The current book is a detailed analysis of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with particular emphasis on the developments since 1994 and South Africa's membership in the organization.

The book consists of eight chapters addressing the theoretical aspects of regionalism in Africa, the history of SADC, trade relations in the sub-continent, investment, and the global context in which these developments take place, particularly the United States and the European Union.

Professor Lee states her own assumptions clearly at the beginning: the European model of market-driven integration is not useful for SADC; many of the prerequisites that make such a model feasible must be obtained for SADC to succeed; SADC's efforts will be mediated by the large scale regional blocks of North America, Western Europe (presumably now Europe) and Asia; and, finally, national development plans are crucial if the openness of regionalism in SADC is to provide any lasting bene-

fit. She also concludes that the global context in which any attempts at regionalism in southern Africa must be conducted and evaluated cannot be ignored, making this book also a contribution to the ongoing debate over regionalization vs. globalization.

Lee's treatment of the theoretical approaches to regionalism and regionalization is thorough and covers the traditional trade-based approaches as well as the broad array of recent efforts that have come to be known as the "new regionalism." It is in this chapter that a more unspoken assumption emerges: Lee considers a strong state as a key prerequisite of successful regional cooperation. The discussion of the "new regionalism," while presenting many important critiques, ultimately falls short because of this assumption. Especially the question of regionalism from below remains underexamined because Lee assumes that it is simply a Trojan horse for an unfettered growth of market relations. While I agree that informal trade, to pick one example, cannot, by itself, lead to better regional cooperation, it is nevertheless important to investigate the origins of such trade flows. More often than not, they reflect long established patterns that

predate the establishment of modern states. The difficulty of state-to-state cooperation may well lie in the fact that such top-down schemes take colonial borders as given and ignore pre-colonial patterns of flows, be they of people or goods. The SADC states would be well advised to pay attention to such networks. It would not represent a capitulation to market forces, but the recognition of social spaces and networks that do not consider modern territoriality as terribly relevant.

The historical review of both SADC and SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference) is thorough. Lee revisits the debate of its origin, the changing organizational structure, and the current debates over the political role of SADC in southern Africa. Lee also outlines the complex overlapping regional agreements and relationships that have, if anything, made regional cooperation more difficult for the member states. The result is clear: with the exception of Zimbabwe (presumably before the current meltdown), most member states have thin trade relations with each other.

The chapter on the Free Trade Agreement of 1996 provides an excellent and exhaustive review of the complexities of negotiating and implementing a trade agreement in the context of dramatically different levels of economic development and preparedness. The detail of the explanation and the very relevant examples bring to light the roadblocks that emerge when individual states attempt to promote their own product while hoping to block as much of their neighbors' exports as possible. Lee is also cognizant of the fact that industrial development, in the past paired with trade liberalization, has taken a back seat

in these negotiations. The impact of the World Trade Organization, the United States (in the form of the African Growth and Opportunity Act [AGOA]) and the European Union further complicate the trade discussions, and Lee points out that further trade cooperation within SADC can serve as a basis for taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the latter.

The review of regional investment patterns, in turn, focuses on investments that have a directly regional component, that is, the various corridor developments with particular emphasis on the Maputo Corridor. Lee also highlights the dominant position of South African investors in the region both directly and as a springboard for global corporations.

The book concludes with a call to "unequivocally [reject] market integration at this junction" (p. 237) and to focus instead on a regional managed trade regime that aims at coordinated planning efforts to enhance productivity and development. It is here that Lee comes to recognize the importance of the informal sector as an indicator of the degree of regionalization. While rejecting market integration, Lee nevertheless concludes that the prerequisites for market integration—economic stability, political stability, increased intra-regional trade and enhanced investment—are crucial goals that must be achieved if managed regionalism is to succeed.

Note

[1]. Margaret C. Lee, *SADCC: The Political Economy of Development in Southern Africa* (Nashville: Winston-Derek, 1989).

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