BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Governance and the postcolony: Views from Africa

DAVID EVERATT (ED.) (2019).
Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, (pp. x, 327)

Introduction

This review first considers the overarching argument and structure of the edited volume along with the contributors thereto. Using critical discourse analysis, this review goes on to explore the extent to which various chapters seem to deliver or not deliver on meeting the book's promise of new perspectives about governance in the so-called postcolony. Finally, the analytical assessment is followed by a conclusion that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

Overarching argument, structure and contributors

In the introduction to the volume, which is penned by the editor David Everatt, the authors argue that the term governance is "facing a substantial risk of losing urgency and relevance as it drowns in multiple definitions, forms, applications, and is used more as a method of reprimand than a tool to unleash local and global democratic energies. Intellectually, governance has to navigate context, power and application in the global south, where the postcolony is under attack from decolonialists and others (p. 7)". To buttress this argument the table of contents is organised in two parts. Part I, entitled 'Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa in Theory and Practice' is comprised of seven chapters. Part II, 'Sectors and Locations' entails six chapters. Front matter to the edited volume includes figures and tables laid out by chapters and a delineation of abbreviations and acronyms. Each chapter ends with its respective reference list. Back matter of the edited volume lists the contributors, followed by the index. Among the contributors are highly experienced and accomplished academicians and practitioners. These include David Everatt, head of Wits School of Governance with a far reaching background in applied socio-economic and development research, distinguished professor Patrick Bond, economist and Wits research director Pundy Pillay, Wits academic Darlene Miller and PhD candidate Rebecca Pointer along with sociologist Babalwa Magoqwana who employs ethnographic methodologies and historian Naledi Nomalanga Mkhize who ushers pre-colonial African history into the contemporary era – both of whom are with Nelson Mandela University.

Analytic Review of Governance and the postcolony: Views from Africa

Admittedly and unapologetically the reviewer uses critical discourse analysis to discern whether the 'views from Africa' are undergirded by African epistemologies. Time and space constrain

exploration in this review of all thirteen chapters. Therefore, certain chapters of the volume are highlighted to help assess the convincingness of the foretasted argument and achievement of book's aims. Taken as a whole, a book that offers fresh insight on improving governance across the African continent – or even region by region, is long overdue. Generally, the chronology of chapters delineated in the table of contents differs from the order of chapter arguments discussed in the introduction. Unquestionably, as Everatt states in Chapter 1, the term governance "is so replete with content that it is in some danger of bursting, while meaning less and less" (p. 31). Too often, Everatt continues, "governance is reduced to a set of indicators – usually of 'good' governance – which are stripped of context, and fail to address power, complexity and competition" (p. 32). That first chapter sets the tone for the volume emphasising consideration of context – but it also tends to sway the reader toward seeing governance as dynamic power differentials and accountability measures.

Governance is not the only contested term. The term 'postcolony' appears problematic and the sub-titles do not necessarily reflect the contents therein. Not unlike exogenously driven treatment of governance in Africa, it seems that the term 'postcolony' is monolithic as if each African country endures the same experience. Was there only one colony and one coloniser, is diversity rendered meaningless? In Part I, only Pillay's Chapter 3 dwells on 'sub-Saharan Africa' per se. Chapter 1 (David Everatt) comparatively analyses and intricately captures salient issues regarding the meanings and contextualisation of governance or the lack thereof. Chapter 2 (Salim Latib) reminds us of African Union instruments. Chapter 6 (Anthoni van Nieuwkerk and Bongiwe Mphahlele) is about West Africa (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra) regarding poor crisis management and weak institutions that arguably exacerbated the spread of the Ebola virus epidemic. The Southern African region is brought to bear in Chapters 4, 5 and 7. Both Chapters 4 and 7 focus on South Africa with Patrick Bond's use of South African foreign policy to tease out the global/local nexus of imperialism and conflict and Susan Booysen's discussion of adversarial network governance for public policymaking in South Africa. Chapter 5 (Caryn Abrahams) provides lessons from Zambia about governance of urban food systems. All of the chapters in Part II are about South African sectors and locations.

Next, using the term 'sub-Saharan Africa' in the Part I sub-title is further problematised as exogenously imposed terminology that has gained worldwide currency. It would seem that views from Africa would begin to dispel and deconstruct notions such as 'sub-Saharan Africa' and the 'Middle East' – another geopolitical construction which perpetuates coloniality. Views from Africa should deliberate epistemological grounds for delinking such terminology as Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries in Africa which give deference to colonisers (although these terms were not used in this book). Pointedly, unless 'views from Africa' are grounded in African ways of knowing (meaning pre-colonial and indigenous worldviews and values), 'views from Africa' will not differ from views that originate elsewhere.

For example, Chapter 2 discusses 'African Shared Values in Governance for Integration', drawing upon African Union (AU) governance instruments and institutions which are well

presented. However, what are these shared values? Who pronounced them and to what extent are African values included? Whilst the chapter author could raise these issues as part of 'voices from Africa', the questions are not easily answered since the AU instruments themselves are epistemologically inexplicit as is AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. To better understand continental governance, a brief mention of regional governance and the intersection of continental, regional, national and sub-national governance would be useful. In Chapter 3, Pillay strategically tackles varied distinctions between governance, 'good governance' and the relevance of these to development. He engages scholars from different parts of the world with divergent views, including the global south context. We see revealing human development categories and rankings regarding 'sub-Saharan African' countries from the United Nations Development Programme and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (pp. 72, 74) before he delves into governance of education and health sectors (75-78). About African countries, Pillay concludes that "corruption, a key aspect of governance, has undoubtedly played a role in preventing more equitable patterns of development" (p. 79), which is a view generally held the world over. But how can 'African views' change the tide? Were slavery, colonisation and apartheid not legalised corrupt acts generating global finance capital sustained by westernised values embedded in coloniality? See, for instance, Michael Bradley's (1978) 'The iceman inheritance: Prehistoric sources of Western man's racism, sexism and aggression'. How can African epistemologies be employed as a value-changing governance architecture?

To be certain, African epistemologies are not race-based. In the face of World Bank and International Monetary efforts to require 'good governance' of African countries to access development funds, Tim Kelsall of the Overseas Development Institute in London made an important observation. Kelsall (2008) noted more than a decade ago the utility of harnessing notions of moral and social obligation and interpersonal accountability to advance the development agenda. These ideals are consistent with African ways of knowing and African values in ancient Africa. Network governance is likewise consistent with the holism inherent in African epistemologies. The rise of network governance in the global north came from failure of Weberian modalities fixed on top-down hierarchies of bureaucracy as embodied in the Westphalian state. If we are unaware of the strengths and weakness of African ways of knowing from centuries gone-by, we perceive approaches like network governance as new. Yet, as insightful as Susan Booysen's case studies are about (1) opposition to free speech legislation, (2) subversion of e-tolling legislation and (3) the fast-forwarding of free post-secondary education given the #FeesMustFall and related protests (pp. 145-161), she advocates a theoretical framework that contravenes African values. Booysen's construct of adversarial network governance replaces the African value of cooperation and interdependence with the westernised value of dichotomies inherent in adversarial relations (p. 142).

In contrast, Abrahams' use of primary data to highlight and shape 'deliberative governance' is indicative of African ways of knowing (p. 104). This includes valuing egalitarian approaches (p. 108) and supporting multi-sector agency (p. 112) in designing urban food systems. Similarly, African

epistemologies are evident in Muller's definition of governance as: "the structured interaction between a central government authority and decentralised groups (or networks) of other agencies and non-state actors that have a direct interest in the use of water and its management" (p. 171). It is holistic, contextualised and suggests experientialism. Inclusiveness and holism are represented by the myriad of actors, it is contextualised for water and experientialism is exhibited by the direct interest. We must just remember that, in African ways of knowing, the water is also part of the network as a living being. However, Muller does not use examples of African countries in the discussion on the history of water governance (p. 172).

Africanised views come through in Everatt's Chapter 1 and somewhat in Chapter 13. Africanised views are seen in Miller, Mkhize, Pointer and Magoqwana's Chapter 12. While Chapter 1 "seeks to set the tone for the rest of this volume by arguing that governance ought to be key to making power accountable – wherever that power is located" (p. 25) that chapter and this volume does much more than that. Everatt uniquely pits scholars, constructs, countries and global governance organisations against each other in a way that lends itself to critical discourse analysis and allocates space for Africanised voices in the governance milieu. Miller, et al. use their primary data to contribute a case study on Green Leadership Schools to the global pool of knowledge on higher education curricula. On the one hand, they see 'brown spaces' as wounded spaces in need of healing – university campuses where "the architectural design and forms of learning instruction mirror the epistemic foundations of colonial and commodified learning spaces" (p. 263). On the other hand, establishing 'green spaces' external to geographical confines of the university and within sites of nature facilitates "green consciousness and green leadership" (p. 266). This includes working with "scientifically relevant indigenous knowledge" such as "local economic strategies related to agriculture, fishing, forest management, astronomy, climatology, architecture, engineering, medicine, nursing, veterinary science and pharmacology" [(p. 266, citing Hewson (2012)]. The transformative aims of the Green Leadership Schools should be read in conjunction with Everatt's Chapter 13 which calls for deep-seated transformation of quality of life for South Africans.

For instance, Everatt argues that the post-apartheid government's focus on "the 'low-hanging fruit' or 'brick and mortar' approach represented a significant failure to the postcolonial imagination, compounded by failures of governance" (p. 284). He goes on to indicate that this "may have fundamentally compromised the possibility of a deep-seated transformation of society as a whole" (p. 284). Everatt complains that the focus of the Nelson Mandela Foundation's position paper (Hatang and Harris, 2015) on a black consciousness perspective toward race is misplaced as is the ANC-led government's priority of service delivery. Either proposition fails "to grasp fully the nettle of a deeply divided and damaged society and populace and the need to tackle multiple issues on numerous fronts" (p. 285). Using results of Quality of Life surveys conducted by the Guateng City-Region Observatory in 2009, 2011 and 2013, Everatt highlights that service delivery has improved but Guatengers remain "deeply scarred about race, xenophobia, deeply alienated and anomic, mistrustful of friends and neighbours, isolated and with from civil society"; and that

"apartheid also damaged all South Africans psychologically, whether at individual or communal levels" (p. 304).

Chapter 12 and 13 should be read in juxtaposition to each other for several reasons. First, Hill, et al. provide insight on how the transformative healing for which Everatt is advocating can be achieved. Second, whilst Everatt laments that the ANC-led government failed to exercise power and allocate budgets to fuel transformative healing in the country (p. 304), Hill, et al. exercised power to design transformative healing governance initiatives without waiting for or relying upon government. The former is an example of having expectations of 'government'. In other words, getting back to Muller's definition of governance, it seems that the term governance implies involvement of actors beyond government. Context matters. However, to envisage governance mainly as a centre of power where we determine who is accountable to whom is to conflate government with governance – both instances require accountability and experience power dynamics. Concerning is the extent to which governance actors use power and resources to disingenuously politicise governance. In Chapter 9, William Gumede (p. 206) encourages depoliticising municipal governance and state-owned enterprises whilst many chapters hone the point of embedding power and accountability in governance. 'Everything is political' when we really think about it. But when it comes to new understandings and new knowledge about governance, we want to avoid reversions to Harold Lasswell's (1936) account of politics leading to who gets what, when and how. Rather, we should aim to mitigate consequences of unequal power dimensions in favour of historicised justice-making and novel inroads to African epistemologically informed governance. Unless governance requires a multiplicity of actors with an emphasis on the greater good derived from results of empirical evidence, we are still dealing with government. South African government is yet to be susceptible to multiple ways of knowing. But governance can be easily Africanised and indigenised as shown in Chapter 12.

Third, Africanised views emerge in Chapter 12 through the employment of African ways of knowing such as the aim for oneness of humans and the natural environment and the use of indigenous knowledge. Finally, fundamentals of African ways of knowing can be glimpsed in Chapter 13 from the author's concern with a holistic and integrated approach to healing South Africans, restoring human dignity and for uncovering what is happening beneath the surface (pp. 287, 293). The use of objective and subjective indicators in the quality of life survey (p. 295) show an effort toward holism. But the use of dichotomies also surface such as black consciousness amounting to a rejection of westernised values (p. 285). Whilst the chapter points out that apartheid psychologically damaged all South Africans, individually and communally (p. 304), it is unclear what this means in terms of beneficiaries of white privilege, their healing and the restoration of their dignity. This falls short of a holistic integrated approach to getting at what is happening beneath the surface and what this suggests for governance modalities for transformative healing. See for example, Robin DiAngelo's 'White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism'. These three examples show Africanised views (Chapters 1 and 12) and the unfolding of Africanised views (Chapter 13) of contemporary governance problem-solving in South Africa, not

just views from Africa. Moreover, given the varying degrees of epistemic freedom with which these and a few other authors engaged, some new perspectives on governance are provided.

Conclusion

This edited volume is a worthy read. As with any other book, it has its strengths and weaknesses. The effort to begin to unpack and make sense of the term governance is a strength. Likewise, the insistence in most chapters to contextualise governance is effective. However, some chapters tend to conflate governance with government which is not useful. A number of chapters provide insightful case studies and suggest research agendas, which could help navigate the way forward. Another strength is the application of exogenously-driven concepts and theories to the South African context. However, using results to craft new Africanised frameworks could be instructive for transformation of African countries. Much of the edited volume of the text draws upon the South African context which should be seen as a strength. Different audiences could find certain chapters of this book beneficial. Specifically, chapters that provide a research agenda or way forward from an Africanised standpoint would be useful to policy-makers, civil society organisations, academics and students within and external to the African continent as contributions to the global/local political economy.

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