

While I highly recommend this book, two main apprehensions emerged as I read it. The first relates to how wedded the author seems to be to the pervasive powers of neoliberal thought and its translation and appropriation into local forms of biopolitics. I side here with those scholars who are increasingly sceptical about neoliberal ideas having such totalizing power in global South contexts. The second apprehension concerns the underlying judgement against prepayment as mediator of a state project imposing an unwanted calculative disposition and a fiscal ethos that fosters further precarity onto an already impoverished population. In my ongoing study of the introduction of electricity prepayment in Maputo, Mozambique, I have found little to no opposition to it – a puzzling finding if we were to assume that prepayment is closely associated with such a reprehensible ethico-political project. However, the fiscal relationship between the state and the population in Maputo seems to have different historical roots and discursive and practical expressions. The population seems to be relieved that prepayment allows them to have indirect interactions with a state apparatus that remains largely oppressive, extractive and unable (or unwilling) to provide for its citizens. In such a context, almost ironically, electricity users prefer the precarity they know to the precarity they don't. These findings are not contradictory to von Schnitzler's, but serve as a reminder that the same technology can be inscribed with different political projects, values and aspirations. Instead of seeing neoliberal ideas and biopolitics everywhere, this suggests we must continue to thoroughly interrogate the historically and site-specific techno-politics of the projects we investigate.

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Jane I. Guyer, *Legacies, Logics, Logistics: essays in the anthropology of the platform economy*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$90 – 978 0 226 32673 3; pb US\$30 – 978 0 226 32687 0). 2016, 320 pp.

In this collection of published and new essays, Jane Guyer extends insights from decades of research on Atlantic West Africa to broader conceptualizations of the economy and economic life. Central is a conversation with recent economic sociology and anthropology that builds on Actor Network Theory (ANT). This influential body of scholarship focuses on 'economization' (making and breaking network associations to delimit the constitution of the economy – and often the market) and 'market devices' (stabilized conceptual or material assemblages that shape economic possibilities and practice). Both concepts underline process as an anti-essentialist move that challenges pre-given categories. And they represent a far-reaching critique of the modernist notions of agency and total system underlying 'the market' and 'capitalism'. Inspired by this approach, Guyer nevertheless reveals its limitations through her exploration of the margins, the historical dimensions of economic life, and 'common sense'. She argues that 'ANT-Economics' often isolates components as though in a laboratory, while its emphasis on 'becoming' neglects where elements of economic life actually come from. These elements are the product of legacies (inherited, and enduring over time); they have logics (conceptual models have prescribed entailments); and they are implicated in logistics (the messy 'craft' of getting things done and making a living).

Guyer strives to bring together ANT-Economics' critical scope, and its exhortation to examine emergent human and non-human agency in economic infrastructures, with 'the obstreperous world of enactment and composition in life-as-lived' (p. 25). The result is the 'platform economy': a metaphor 'suited to the third machine age' that attends to 'parts, labour, and craftsmanship'; histories of assemblages; and unequal control over the result amidst piecemeal 'chipping away' (p. 6).

Through these concerns, Guyer curates essays with diverse original purposes. The first after the opening framing stands as exemplar, tracking histories of food regulation in Britain and Nigeria. Different models of regulatory authority have overlapped in Britain since the nineteenth century, revealing innovation and persisting legacies. The medieval 'guarantor of fixed relationships' (between flour, bread, price and transactors) became the 'protector of purity', which became the 'purveyor of welfare', which recently shifted to 'social cost' to taxpayers (pp. 46–7). The transfer of these models to colonial and postcolonial Nigeria depended on arguments with competing temporalities: applying the same ideas, or those appropriate to an earlier developmental stage; or promoting complementarity for comparative advantage. Uptake was also selective, and a product of power, reflecting metropolitan interests and later government corruption.

The sections that follow draw out key aspects of Guyer's approach. The first considers the public nature of models and economic imaginaries. It includes Guyer's seminal essay on the evacuation of the near future, in conceptions of time shared by macro-economic theory and evangelical Christianity. Present choice is juxtaposed with the ultimate horizon of the long run. It also includes an essay about the Nigerian government's attempts to explain economic governance (and then its silence) during and in the wake of structural adjustment. Both underscore how people's attempts to make sense of their circumstances interact with influential interpretive frameworks. To understand all this complexity, the idea of the 'market economy' is too narrow to be useful, not least because of its polemical valence. Platform economy is Guyer's alternative.

Guyer returns to a theme pioneered in *Marginal Gains*: how forms of calculation shape our shared economic arrangements and imaginations. Guyer extrapolates questions of ordinality from her West African research, provoking the reader to consider competing notions of ordinal rank in places such as the US. Here, she notes, everything seems fodder for ranking schemes, and the schemes themselves involve 'the rampant "reduction" of complex calculations based on counting-number to ordinal number' (p. 132). Linear, ladder-like arenas of recognition jostle with hyperbolic rankings, with huge differences at the top and plateauing further down. An analysis of proliferating percentages follows, probing their meanings where the numerator is accorded great importance, but where the denominator – the whole against which the percentage is measured – is often left vague. Percentages here (from GDP-related spending goals, to measuring weight loss) are aspirational, normative and anchored in future projections, and they enable coherence and equivalence amidst wider fragmentation. Thus, Guyer develops her long-standing plea: that qualitative social scientists not give up numbers to quantitative analysis.

With these building blocks in place, we turn to platforms themselves. Petrol pricing in Nigeria illuminates the messiness of formal structures, as different mechanisms, in tension with each other, produce tangled incoherencies and illegibility. A particular focus on 'shelter' as a category in the consumer price index illustrates the accretion of notions of human value under a single rubric, which is itself key to producing an economic infrastructure. It bears the trace of

successive ways of ‘indexing people to money’: houses mark propertied status (premodern); reproduce labour value (from early modern); meet citizen entitlements (after World War Two); and are assets to manage (1970s onwards).

But the intricacies of formal measurement and valuation require reading through ‘people’s economies’. Here, Guyer takes us back to her seminal approach to money: through conversions between different scales of valuation and practices of counting, with particular temporal horizons. Historical research on Atlantic West Africa offers insights into monetary lives today, in Nigeria and in the West. She also asks us to consider the moral economy of prices, in an era when apparently transparent composition – listing what exactly goes into prices – can itself conceal. ‘The traditional-customary nature of our categories of price composition’ hides burgeoning financial payments in plain sight (p. 216).

The collection’s concluding discussion of how the ‘real economy’ is mobilized and experienced returns the reader to an emphasis on elements, not simply process, in economic infrastructures – the role of ‘found objects’ in people’s economic craftsmanship. This conclusion rounds off an important set of provocations – theoretical and methodological – on how anthropologists might approach the complexity of economic life today.

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