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Information on *International Review of Social History* and all other Cambridge journals can be accessed via [cambridge.org](http://cambridge.org)

Printed and bound by Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow, UK

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In January 1977, Egypt was beset by protests, a day after the Prime Minister had announced the end of government subsidies for consumer goods. In December 1983, protests began in southern Tunisia against the price increase, and then spread to the rest of the country. In March 1994, students in Niamey, Niger, vented their anger at the deterioration in their living conditions. Elsewhere, too, like in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Togo, deteriorating living conditions – or what was felt as such – have given rise to a variety of social movements and unrest since the 1970s. Although each of these events and movements had its own logic, they all took place in the context of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, generally referred to as structural adjustment reforms. Structural adjustments have been the subject of extensive literature, but to a large extent existing studies have focused on the logic (and documentation) of international financial institutions, national governments, and private enterprises. By focusing on the revolts against, and more generally on the multiple social responses to structural adjustments policies, such as anger, adaptation, or indifference, this volume suggests that the perspective should be reversed. It investigates the ways in which the upheavals brought about by this new liberalization were actually experienced by the people of Africa and the Middle East in their daily and material lives and their shared concepts of fairness and unfairness. This volume intends to highlight the long-standing reality of discontent with capitalism in this part of world. It also aims to stimulate a more general reflection on popular feelings and social responses to neoliberalism, not only in Africa and the Middle East, but also in the rest of the world.

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ISBN 978-1-0090-6996-0



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### INTRODUCTION

- 1 Introduction: Interpreting the Global Economy through Local Anger  
*Leyla Dakhli and Vincent Bonnecase*

### ARTICLES

- 23 Remembering the 1977 Bread Riots in Suez: Fragments and Ghosts of Resistance  
*Nayera Abdelrahman Soliman*
- 41 The Fair Value of Bread: Tunisia, 28 December 1983–6 January 1984  
*Leyla Dakhli*
- 69 “We Cannot Please Everyone”: Contentions over Adjustment in EPRDF Ethiopia (1991–2018)  
*Mehdi Labzaé and Sabine Planel*
- 93 Peasant Resistance in Burkina Faso’s Cotton Sector  
*Bettina Engels*
- 113 Privatizing the Commons: Protest and the Moral Economy of National Resources in Jordan  
*Matthew Lacouture*
- 139 “Fraudonomics”: Cartooning against Structural Adjustment in Togo  
*Robin Frisch*
- 161 International Monetary Fund Riots or Nasserian Revolt? Thinking Fluid Memories: Egypt 1977  
*Mélanie Henry*
- 181 Democracy and Adjustment in Niger: A Conflict of Rationales  
*Vincent Bonnecase*
- 215 A Well-Adjusted Debt: How the International Anti-Debt Movement Failed to Delink Debt Relief and Structural Adjustment  
*Hélène Baillot*

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