

at home, and concludes that estimating unremunerated work, although posing a number of limitations, is an important source for studying choices. Chapter three outlines the understandings of decision-making in the conditions of risk and uncertainty. Chibnik stresses how the experiments of cognitive psychologists and models of economists should be accompanied by anthropologists' ethnography-based descriptions. Chapter four is devoted to assessing economic experimental games conducted by anthropologists, whose conclusions, as Chibnik shows using a problem from his own research, have a limited scope of application. Chapter five concentrates on the limitations of using the household as a unit of analysis for understanding decision-making processes. The author concludes that this type of reasoning might be fruitful in certain situations, especially for anthropologists. However, it ought to be under the condition of building 'detailed ethnographic descriptions and analyses of how particular important household-level choices are made in different times and places' (p. 141). Finally chapter six problematizes the axiom of the 'tragedy of commons' and some mathematical models of rational-choice following it, pointing out numerous ethnographic examples that provide an alternative view on the issue. His examples reveal rules and institutions embedded in culture that protect communities from tragedies. The conclusion repeats the main arguments of the book and puts forth the necessity for further interaction based on the complementary character of economics and anthropology in studying choice.

The book is essential to any economic anthropologist reflecting on the role of the discipline and its relationship to other social sciences. Chibnik ably answers these questions and provides a complex introduction to how economic anthropologists go about their studies. The author's research experience and his thorough understanding of economic anthropology become evident in the book, which accurately portrays the sins scholars from both sides are tempted to commit. For instance, 'economists too often oversimplify, make unrealistic assumptions, ignore history and culture' and 'anthropologists too often express

ideas imprecisely, mindlessly oppose quantification, and refuse to generalize' (p. 171). Chibnik not only reviews the voices of scholars studying the issues in question but also uses examples from his entire work that constitute a valuable source of argumentation. Besides that, his examples provide an interesting perspective on Chibnik's intellectual trajectory over almost 40 years, showing how the field problems found at the earliest stages of his academic career developed into further projects and influenced the conclusions of this book.

The language and outline of *Anthropology, Economics, and Choice* allows it to serve as a supplementary, yet important, reading for undergraduate courses in economic anthropology. The problems addressed in the volume in an interdisciplinary manner can also be of great value for a broader range of scholars, who will appreciate the insightful discussion about the role of the discipline in solving economic problems and understanding choice. In this sense the book has the potential to become an important contribution to economic anthropology, and interest economists, sociologists and psychologists in an equal manner.

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**Eguavoen, Irit. 2008. *The political ecology of household water in Northern Ghana*. Vol. 10 ZEF Development Studies. Berlin: Lit Verlag. 328 pp. Pb.: €34.90. ISBN 978-3-8258-1613-1.**

In essence, Irit Eguavoen's study is a de-romanticised (hi)story of water in the village of Sirigu in Northern Ghana. Her research was conceived and conducted within the frames of an applied project 'Global Change of the Hydrological Cycle' (GLOWA) in the Volta river basin. Its principal aim was to record and analyse mutually related changes of the respective natural environment and the human agency within it. The results could not provide substantial solutions to general development

issues in this semi-arid African region, but they offer insight into the challenges of freshwater supply in rural and peri-urban environments. The author's epistemic position acknowledges the dynamic interrelationality of natural and social phenomena; thus in her work the local reality – village water shortages – is approached and apprehended holistically. While analysing different aspects of dealing with water from everyday domestic needs and uses of water, to cognitive, normative and legal schemes with regard to water, institutional water resource management, political discourses and popular narratives on water resource degradation, she takes into account both micro/macro and local/global dynamics.

In socio-cultural contexts natural resources transcend their natural dimension, so water could be regarded as a socio-cultural artefact due to the activities involved in household water 'production'. The village under study faces major challenges in this respect, which go beyond environmental and climatic restraints. Water supply facilities (most commonly hand-dug wells and boreholes with hand pumps) are provided by government programmes, big external donor agencies and small NGOs. Financially, Ghanaian rural communities largely depend on external help, i.e. international development interventions, since the donors take on the biggest share (93%) for project implementation. Although the dominant policy paradigm in Ghana encourages participatory models of water resources management and inclusion of water users in decision-making processes, its application is successful only in urban environments, because the state is basically withdrawing from rural and small town managerial schemes. The financial burden placed on rural communities and the lack of skilled water professionals and clear regulation of management responsibilities are reflected most obviously in the malfunctioning and abandonment of bigger piped water works, as is the case in Sirigu. Consequently, every time the village water infrastructure is left unattended, the consequences are dire.

Speaking in legal terms, water in Ghana is perceived as a (non-exclusive) right for every-

one, which is determined by the local water law. The latter is incorporated into (strictly speaking, it coincides with) the statutory water legislation implemented by international (UN) regulations. Various normative levels, as in this case, form a situation of legal pluralism in which different interest groups, competing for limited water resource and protecting their water rights, can call on diverse legal options. In Eguavoen's words, this 'provides a coping strategy to deal with environmental, livelihood, and social and political uncertainty as well as with knowledge uncertainty' (p. 20). The knowledge domain is another sphere of the local/global polarisation. The narratives about the underprivileged economic situation in Northern Ghana (and elsewhere in Africa) are predominantly based on western scientific discourses that appeal to the unfavourable geographic reality of drought, deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion etc. However, limited natural resources are only part of the story. The legacy of developmental neglect, the application of inappropriate colonial and post-colonial resource management practices (economic overexploitation) and the ignorance of traditional environmental knowledge and local socio-ecologic relationships contribute to the formation of a perspective in which water un/availability can be seen as an outcome of complex geo-hydrological, socio-political and institutional factors. But the ability to grasp this is not the exclusive privilege of scientists. In her detailed ethnographic account of Sirigu's watery landscape, Eguavoen shows that water shortage in local perceptions is not understood as scarcity; people are aware of fundamental financial and technical limitations to access potable water. Their locally oriented collective efforts to create and sustain additional water sources often fall short, but within further development planning their voice and knowledge could and must be acknowledged. What cannot fall short in this case are the efforts of anthropologists to make them heard.

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