world of international assistance itself is a thought unfortunately not explored in the book.

Jos Mooij
Institute of Social Studies, PO Box 29776, 2502 LT The Hague, The Netherlands.
E-mail: mooij@iss.nl


This edited volume brings to the fore the vital concept of economic rights. The selections aim to address primarily three different though interrelated aspects — conceptual clarity, measurement issues and policy concerns — by using both theoretical arguments and empirical statistics related to economic rights. These aspects of economic rights have hitherto been somewhat under-addressed. The editors have filled the existing research gaps by not only addressing the debate on economic rights in a much more comprehensive manner, but also by providing a deeper understanding of the notion of economic rights. The articles in this volume are by knowledgeable writers, some of whom are established authorities in their respective fields.

In an informative introduction, the editors lay out the issues related to economic rights and provide a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of available research on economic rights. The book is broadly compartmentalized into three sections, focusing on concepts, measurement and policy issues. The first five chapters provide conceptual clarity on the notion of economic rights. They point out certain misconceptions and seek to enlarge the domain of economic rights. Jack Donnelly provides a critical survey of economic rights as they are understood in the west. Wiktor Osiatynski, while addressing various controversies about the scope of social and economic rights, provides a finer conceptual understanding of them through a ‘needs-based approach’. Albino Berrera addresses the question of economic rights in the knowledge economy and is concerned with the efficacy of economic rights in strengthening the foundations for production and efficiency. Similarly, Michael Goodhart, by relating democracy to the notions of subsistence and basic income, strongly advocates for basic income — irrespective of its high cost — mainly due to its benefits. The final contribution in this section by Philip Harvey addresses the question of benchmarking the right to work and assesses the fate of the 1940s era full-employment/right-to-work policy goal in light of the stagflation crises of the 1970s.

The second part of the book focuses on the measurement issues related to economic rights. The contribution by Audrey R. Chapman focuses on evaluating the status of efforts to monitor economic social and cultural rights. Similarly, the contribution by Clair Apodaca addresses various issues related to measurement. Mwangi S. Kimenyi specifically focuses on institutions and governance aspects of human rights. The analytical findings reveal the existence of a strong link between institutions and pro-poor growth. David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards in their contribution forward the idea of developing a measure of the efforts governments actually make to improve economic and social human rights. Shawna E. Sweeney, by providing a cross-national analysis, aims at explaining the determinants of government respect for women’s economic rights.
The third part of the book covers various aspects related to policy issues. The contribution by Sigrun I. Skogly and Mark Gibney helps to clarify various misconceptions and controversies about extraterritorial obligations towards economic rights. Similarly, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr examines Millennium Development Goal #8 as an instrument of international human rights obligation to measure progress and hold states accountable. David P. Forsythe addresses international economic rights related policy issues of law, social reality and political choice in the case of the United States. Susan Dicklitch and Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann focus on public policy and economic rights in Ghana and Uganda. The contribution by Kaushik Basu assesses human rights as an instrument of emancipation and economic development. Finally, Peter Dorman, by considering occupational safety, health and child labour, focuses on various issues related to workers’ rights and economic development.

These diverse but inter-related scholarly pieces inform the reader about the current status of economic rights. Besides clarifying various misconceptions, they provide a deeper understanding of the subject. Two appendices on the ‘Universal Declaration of Economic Rights’ and the ‘International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’, along with a detailed subject cum author index add to the user-friendly nature of the book. This volume of collected papers addresses very relevant issues about economic rights.

I highly recommend this volume for researchers, policy makers, policy activists and students working on economic rights and social security.

Varinder Jain
Research Scholar, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuzha, Kerala, India.
E-mail: varinder@cds.ac.in


It is a commonplace that development interventions have a profound impact on landscapes, livelihoods and identities of people. This book seeks to understand the rationale of such interventions — ‘what they seek to change, and the calculations they apply’ (p. 1) in the context of Indonesia, where improvement schemes have had their play for almost the last two centuries. For the author, the focus is not on the outcome of these interventions as such but rather on the unbridgeable gap between what is attempted and what is accomplished. Li is intrigued by the sheer persistence of ‘the will to improve’ despite well-documented shortcomings and failures. While looking at the troubled history of these improvement schemes in the highlands of Sulawesi, Li also examines the limits of expert knowledge that has informed them.

Indeed, planned development is premised upon a dichotomous boundary that clearly separates those who need to be developed (the target group) from those who will do the developing (experts and trustees). The latter are distinguished by their education and technical know-how and are generally part of the transnational development apparatus — donors, development banks, NGOs and consultants. They primarily conceive of improvement as a technical domain — diagnosing problems, prescribing interventions and outlining beneficial results of different plans and programmes. They