

University of Chicago Press.

- Freytas-Tamura, D., & Schreuer, M. (2015). Belgian minister says government lacks control over neighborhood linked to terror plots. *New York Times*. November 15, Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/live/paris-attacks-live-updates/belgium-doesnt-have-control-over-molenbeek-interior-minister-says/>
- Grabinsky, J., & Butler, S. M. (2015). The anti-poverty case for "smart" gentrification, Part 2. *Brookings*. February 11, Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/2015/02/11/the-anti-poverty-case-for-smart-gentrification-part-2/>

*David Varady*  
University of Cincinnati

OILING THE URBAN ECONOMY: LAND, LABOUR, CAPITAL AND THE STATE IN SEKONDI-TAKORADI, GHANA, By Franklin Obeng-Odoom, London: Routledge. 2014.

Sekondi-Takoradi is a city comprised of twin cities of Sekondi and Takoradi, and it is the capital of Sekondi Takoradi District and the Western Region of Ghana. This urban conglomerate lies on the main railway line to Accra and is currently known as the Oil City of Ghana due to the massive discovery of oil in the western region and the massive migration of people to it. *Oiling the Urban Economy: Land, Labour, Capital and the State in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana*, by Franklin Obeng-Odoom, is an attempt to critically analyze the urban dynamics in this new secondary "Oil City" that has been transformed following the oil discovery and then economic development and migration; two themes that are in the very core of modern urban history and are well known from Marxist texts which are echoed throughout the book.

This is a fascinating book for those who are interested in urban-political economy in general and in the African context in particular. The book presents the findings of a detailed fieldwork. It documents and critically analyses the economic, social, spatial and political changes in this urban setting. The core of the book (chapters 3-9) is a unique opportunity to those who are not familiar with African urbanism in the last two decades to understand the complexity of the phenomenon.

In the scope of this review I will not be able to refer to the richness of the detailed study presented by Obeng-Odoom, but rather I would like to highlight the central discussion articulated throughout this book, namely problematizing the "curse doctrine" in relation to oil cities in Africa. As Obeng-Odoom rightly argues in the case of Africa's oil cities, the resource curse doctrine is problematic "...because it was formulated without taking into account the dynamics of space, urbanity and urbanism" (p. 8) in Africa. Obeng-Odoom's aim to investigate the very specific condi-

tions of African urbanization is the basis for his ethnographic attempt to depict the nuanced meaning of Sekondi-Takoradi transformation that is “rapidly becoming host to speculators, migrants and investors” (pp. 10). Here one can recognize the “classical” urban contradiction; industrial development, economic interests and the re-structuring of social strata.

Indeed, Obeng-Odoom highlights the new social structure and power relations occurred in Sekondi-Takoradi following the introduction of the oil economy. According to his findings there is a significant investment by different bodies including central and local governments as well as by urban authorities and international companies. There is “a boom” Obeng-Odoom claims “... in direct and indirect employment in the metropolis, rendering commentaries about oil generating an ‘enclave economy’ incomplete at best” (pp. 185-6).

From a spatial point of view Obeng-Odoom points to the substantial increase in land and housing values, on the “dollarization and commodification of the land sector... Petty investors and speculators ... have poured into the twin city or have been drawn from other sectors into the property market...” (p. 186). Indeed, the book offers a unique view on the demographic engineering that accompanies the new oil city:

“New renters are higher income earners. Owners are moving into gated communities. Low-income people are being moved into poorer and poorer housing or paying the same rent for poorer housing or sometimes even more rent for the same housing” (pp. 186-7)

To sum up, when I finished reading this book I could not stop thinking about the similarities between urban transformations in Sekondi-Takoradi and many of the cities in the “West” that are the product of capitalism. After all, as noted by Peter Marcuse “...[N]either cities nor places in them are unordered, unplanned; the question is only whose order, whose planning, for what purpose...” (Marcuse, 1995:244). These words, I would suggest, are the proper lenses through which *Oiling the Urban Economy* should be read.

## REFERENCES

- Marcuse, P. (1995) Not Chaos, but Walls: Postmodernism and the Partitioned City. In Watson, S. and Gibson, K. (eds.) *Postmodern Cities and Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 187-198.

*Haim Yacobi*  
Ben Gurion University of the Negev