

residents may appeal any municipal planning document to the county's planning board, causing a municipality's decision to be reviewed, if found that it jeopardizes public interests.

The chapter dealing with the local authority districts in Sweden (by Axelsson) is another central paper in the volume. Municipal fragmentation is an acute problem commonly recognized in Sweden. Until the early 1970's, most municipalities in this country were small, consisting of a few thousands or even hundreds of residents. This municipal fragmentation resulted in acute problems associated with provision of services and inefficient financial management. However, the problem of municipal fragmentation was solved in Sweden both promptly and efficiently. According to the 1973 legislation, the minimal size of a municipality was set to 10,000 residents. Municipalities below this size were allowed to choose neighboring local authorities with which they wanted to be amalgamated. No governmental dictate was applied to influence the municipalities' choices. However, the process of "deliberation" was limited by a short "grace" period, after which governmental grants to "indecisive" municipalities came to a hold. The legislation was thoroughly enforced leading to the reduction of the total number of municipalities from 1031 in 1960 to 290 in 1999. Due to the economies of size, management efficiencies and services improved, while the government's transfer of funds to the local municipalities reduced dramatically.

Unfortunately, the quality of many other chapters in the volume is more inferior. One chapter, for instance, develops a whole "theory" based on the interviews of two (!) randomly chosen planners, whose opinions are used for wide-ranging generalizations.

Lastly, I shall note that the book's sub-title (i.e.: *A Northern Perspective*) is somewhat misleading. Nearly 90 percent of the book's chapters deal solely with Sweden, while only two chapters address planning issues in other countries—the international trade in the Baltic region (Aberg) and reconstruction challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hasic). Unless the latter country can be considered as a part of the Nordic group of nations, the more appropriate subtitle for the book would thus be "A Swedish perspective" or "A European perspective," perhaps.

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HUNGER: THEORY, PERSPECTIVES AND REALITY by Amitava Mukherjee.
King's SOAS Studies in Development Geography, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

The increase of food production in a country to the level required by the population constitutes an important basis for enhanced food security on a national scale. India managed to achieve such growth in cereal food production, as a result of govern-

ment policy and the so-called green revolution. Thus India is far ahead of most countries in the Middle East in terms of national food production. Most Middle Eastern nations, including Israel, require large imports of food grains to feed their respective populations. Such a situation may be acceptable in stable economic and political circumstances, as long as sufficient food is for sale on the world market. But it may be a recipe for disaster in times of crisis, which tend to recur at unpredictable stochastic intervals, according to the lessons of history.

Although India succeeded to increase its average national food production to levels required by its huge population of one billion people, the paradox is that malnutrition and hunger were not eradicated on the village or household level. This is the focus of the book, which treats the complex nature of hunger in terms of personal wealth, entitlement, gender and socio-economic conditions, based on case studies and examples from India. The author, Amitava Mukherjee (Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, India) succeeded to present a detailed account on the complex issue of hunger, in which theory and factual analyses are well integrated, providing a wealth of detailed information on the subject. The book contains, on the negative side, a number of annoying text repetitions, which should have been removed in the final editing process.

The approach on hunger and food security developed by Amartya Sen—the entitlement and deprivation thesis—is singled out by the author in his introduction as by far the most influential publication in the last decades. There may be enough to eat on a national scale, but food security must also be seen on the personal level. More than 326 million people in India live below the poverty line, while an estimated 300-400 million people are hungry, despite the tremendous achievements of the green revolution. The link between poverty and personal food insecurity seems clear from the above figures in general terms. However, the issues are much more complex in detail, as entitlement to food may be a mix of production-based entitlement, trade-based entitlement, labour entitlement, as well as inheritance and transfer entitlement. An individual growing himself more than enough food for survival may still be food insecure, due to a lack of entitlement to use the food thus produced. For example, in the 1940s during the Great Bengal Famine, thousands of people died, while the granaries, owned by landlords, were full of food grains, produced by those who perished.

Chapter two deals with economic perspectives on the theory of hunger. On a macro level the author poignantly highlights the difference between objectives and accomplishments in the sphere of food security under the auspices of the United Nations, as expressed in major conference statements. The 1974 World Food Conference in Rome expressed the goal "...that in 10 years time, no child will go to bed hungry, no family would fear for its next day's bread and human being's future and capacities would not be stunted by malnutrition". The reality is that 30 years later, by 2004, the year of publication of his book, an estimated 800 million people went to bed hungry every night, according to the author. He points out that military

expenditures and wars have a very negative economic impact on the production and availability of food, as well as disrupting entitlements to food. Moreover, large financial resources, which might have been used for food production, job creation, poverty reduction and entitlement improvement, are used for military expenditure.

The social and political perspectives on the theory of hunger are presented in chapter three. Dialectical, reductionistic, moral economy, political economy and gender approaches are discussed. Concerning the latter issue, feeding of the male members of the household is given priority in the patriarchal values of Bengali Hindu society. The women eat after the men, often getting a smaller and less nutritious share of the food, while male children get more food and medical attention than their sisters. Such socially sanctioned rights related to gender play a role in individual food security.

Two community perspectives on hunger are presented in chapters four and five, based on research in two villages of the Varanasi district, near the Ganges River, in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Agriculture forms the basis of the economy in the two villages. The inhabitants produce food either as owner or tenant cultivator, while both groups suffer hunger and food insecurity throughout the year. The year is characterised by distinct hunger seasons lasting many months, in relation to the agricultural calendar and income levels. Women suffer in particular, as they have less employment opportunities and related exchange entitlements to food. Economic diversification and job opportunities in industry did mitigate food insecurity in one village. There is a clear correlation between income and food intake.

Chapter seven describes the perspectives of rural women on food security in a tribal village of West Bengal, as studied during the period 1993-1998. The village has 49 households, belonging to the Lodha Tribe, and most are landless. Food calendars were prepared by the women for some of the years in the above period, in cooperation with the investigation, in order to study the respective availability and contribution of different food items throughout the year. Rice, potato, pulses, vegetables, fruits, fish, snails and food from natural wild vegetation are included in the tables. The hunger situation in the village is worst in the summer and monsoon months. The role of the secondary food system is critical, particularly during the hunger period, to provide food from common property resources, micro-environments and forests. The women bear the burden to provide food for their households, according to the social tradition. Households did not make attempts to migrate, did not access food from the public distribution system, and did not seek outside help, despite the often desperate food insecurity situation. Education is crucial to make these people aware of their rights and entitlements to state resources.

Force Field Analysis in a number of villages identified and evaluated positive and negative forces, environmental or social, concerning food security, as described in chapter eight. The Bolangir district, perpetually stricken by hunger, situated in the State of Orissa, is the focus of the next chapter. Also here villagers did not access food from the public distribution system. On-farm and off-farm employment is very

limited. Therefore, the creation of wage employment seems the only way forward to provide people with economic access to food. Indeed general economic growth and expansion, related to improved education in rural areas, is seen by the author, in the concluding chapter ten, as the key to increased food security for the poor.

A new value system for agriculture is proposed, in opposition to Keynesian self-centredness and competitiveness, by which economic, social and environmental values and factors are integrated. The book gives a valuable and detailed account of the results of participatory research methods concerning food insecurity in selected Indian villages, presenting the paradox of manifold hunger on the village and household level in a country that has achieved remarkable progress in producing sufficient food on a national scale.

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