

Working Paper

Pastoralism and social protection

From the margins: findings and avenues for reflection on social protection policies in Africa

Sergio Magnani and Véronique Ancey

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List of abbreviations

AFD – French Development Agency

WB – World Bank

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

HSNP – Hunger Safety Net Program

INSD – Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie (National Institute of Statistics and Demography)

ILO – International Labour Organization of the United Nations

PNSP – Productive Safety Net Program

RBM – *Billital Maroobe* regional pastoral network

SIP-BF – Système d'information sur le pastoralism au Burkina Faso (System for Information on Pastoralism in Burkina Faso)

Summary

At a time when political crises are dramatically amplifying ongoing structural transformations in rural areas across the West African Sahel and the Horn of Africa, new demands are emerging for not only productive but also civic rights for pastoral populations that have historically been politically marginalised.

This paper, which considers social protection schemes as a potentially key element in the relationship with the state in rural areas and thus in the foundation of a social contract in African drylands, proposes to open up avenues for reflection by drawing on the example of pastoralists, who are held to be illustrative of the most marginalised populations. A literature review allows for an analysis of the conditions of different social protection schemes and their effects, with a view to formulating an agenda for developing social protection programmes offering universal coverage. Reflecting the central role of development institutions in this field, a first part proposes to better contextualise the “universal” or “targeted” programmes that underpin development interventions. A second part focuses on instituted forms of redistribution in pastoral areas, highlighting their diversity, their practical norms and their dynamics as they interact with the transfer mechanisms implemented in public action.

The analyses arising from the paper serve to underline the following:

- (i) The need to renew our understanding of the transformations underway, their political drivers and their effects on a range of actors who are not equally placed to face change. It will thereby be possible to consider the place of social protection in a renewed public policy framework as a pillar of a new social contract between rural populations and states and as a lever for food sovereignty.
- (ii) The need to rethink the challenges of extending social protection beyond wage labour and decontextualised welfare state models, moving past preconceived ideas about programmes and their funding to focus more on the empirical dimensions of social protection policies.
- (iii) The importance of understanding local redistributive institutions in the complexity of the values, forms of belonging/exclusion and power relations that underpin them. Recognising the historicity and dynamism of these institutions makes it possible to interpret their evolution in light of wider contextual changes and to envisage public policies that promote their potential to provide protection and social cohesion.
- (iv) The urgent need to adapt existing schemes to the characteristics of pastoral systems and contexts. It is moreover essential to develop schemes enshrined in law that combine contributory insurance programmes based on recognised professional statuses and unconditional non-contributory assistance programmes intended to provide broad coverage for poorer sections of society using a life-cycle approach.

The paper concludes by arguing that a new agenda for extending social protection must be built on an approach that is aligned with coherent agricultural and fiscal policies and that reflects the defining characteristics of the social fabric. The choices to be made pertain to the prerogatives and obligations of states to protect the livelihoods of their citizens.

Introduction

Pastoralism plays a central role in African food systems, particularly in the continent's drylands, by taking advantage of highly variable environments in order to sustain productive low-input animal systems. By providing affordable animal products which are rich in protein, pastoralism contributes significantly to meeting the food needs of rural and urban population, while creating wealth and jobs on a large scale. Despite these important contributions, pastoralists remain marginalised from policymaking processes and have limited access to public services, particularly social protection programmes.

Both the West African Sahel and the Horn of Africa are experiencing structural transformations in rural areas driven by the growing concentration of the means of production, the enclosure of strategic resources formerly managed as commons, the closure of administrative borders and tightening constraints on human and animal mobility. By exacerbating forms of exclusion and social and economic inequalities, these transformations have major negative impacts on production systems, livelihoods, living conditions and the security of populations. Pastoralists are particularly vulnerable because as endogenous flexible regulations disappear, strategic resources for feeding livestock become scarce.

This working paper expands on the thinking initiated by a research project conducted in 2019-2020 among young pastoralists in towns and cities in Burkina Faso and Chad¹ which analysed the networks and migration trajectories of young people of pastoral origin towards urban areas. The life stories of young migrants bear witness to the challenge families face in combining mobility and territorial anchoring, as well to the emergence, particularly in Burkina Faso, of demands for not only productive but also civic and social rights, which have thus far not been extended to populations that have historically been politically marginalised.

In relation to these demands, and in light of the context described above, social protection programmes as they currently exist and in their potential future forms need to be examined as a key element of the relationship with the state in rural areas, and as a gateway to identifying potential ways of renewing that relationship. The notion of the “social contract”, as it relates to reciprocal rights, duties and responsibilities between public authorities and populations, is thus central both to analysing the situation and thinking about its future.

Pastoralism provides an ideal case study because of the urgent need to develop and implement appropriate public action programmes in the face of changes threatening pastoral populations' food systems and way of living. The territorial and political marginalisation of pastoralists from national and decentralised political institutions, and from international policy arenas, reflects a condition common to African peasantries, and in particular its subordinate social groups, which results in exclusion from citizens' rights and public services. This working paper follows

¹ Ancey et al. 2020; Magnani et al. 2020; Patat, 2020; Rangé, 2020.

approaches in social science that consider “the margins” to be spaces that are particularly conducive to understanding the emergence and construction of alternatives.

This paper aims to open up avenues for reflection on social protection policies and their scope in rural and pastoral environments in Africa. It draws on bibliographical material from social sciences, particularly anthropological research, conducted in West, East and Southern Africa, on both pastoralism and social protection. The critiques arising from this literature interrogate the conditions and the effects of different social protection programs, thus helping to reconsider the legacy of the frameworks and methods used to date, with a view to formulating an alternative agenda.

The paper is organised into three parts. The first part sets out the issues and challenges underlying the current dynamics of extending social protection in sub-Saharan Africa, going beyond the generic consensus about the need to extend provision for all, to show that development institutions implement interventions based on “universalist” or “targeted” models. Approaches are suggested for historicising and rethinking social protection in relation to the changes taking place in rural Africa, beyond standard frameworks of wage labour and decontextualised models of the “social contract”. The second part begins by highlighting the ethical and political complexity and dynamic nature of local redistributive institutions, as emphasised by the ongoing transformation of pastoral institutions. There follows a review of research into the development and implementation of social protection systems in different pastoralist settings, from cash transfers to education and health programmes and insurance schemes. The third part concludes by indicating avenues for defining an alternative agenda to promote an extension of universal social coverage that is coherent with the transformation of food systems and reformed agricultural and fiscal policies and that can be integrated within the fabric of endogenous redistributive institutions.

1. Social protection in Africa: perspectives from the case of pastoralism

1.1. A snapshot of social protection in sub-Saharan Africa

Limited and disparate coverage in rural areas

Access to social protection around the world is highly unequal, with 53% of the population completely excluded. Coverage is particularly lacking in rural areas, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa where less than 20% of the population has access to a social protection service (ILO, 2021).

Recent studies (Allieu and Ocampo, 2019; ILO and FAO, 2021) have highlighted a set of obstacles to rural access to social protection: a lack of codified legislative frameworks, with several negative consequences (lack of established rights and institutional accountability, unclear criteria for eligibility and entitlement); the explicit exclusion of the poorer sections of populations (precarious, seasonal, self-employed workers); insufficient geographical coverage because of the limited administrative capacity and procedures ill-adapted to local realities.

While these challenges remain largely unmet on a global scale, the social protection sector has been expanding over the last decades. In South Africa, the extension of the social protection system previously reserved for citizens of European origin to the entire population has been one of the key reforms of the post-apartheid transition and is a pillar of the new constitutional and political order. The African Union has publicly stated its commitment to promoting universal social protection in the policy frameworks adopted over the past ten years. Different instruments of social insurance and assistance, like incentivised retirement savings schemes for agricultural workers, subsidised health and agricultural insurance, and cash transfers for the poorest have been introduced in Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Senegal and Ethiopia. Other countries, such as Botswana, Cabo Verde, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Tanzania, have recently established universal old-age social pension schemes.

However, despite significant improvements, social protection provision in sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a strong heterogeneity between regions and countries and generally remains partial and fragmented: it is not always enshrined in law, has low average coverage (17,4%) and high exclusion rates for vulnerable groups (women with children, people with disabilities), and accounts for only a small share in public spending (2,1% of GDP; ILO, 2021). In many countries of West, Central and East Africa, social protection interventions in rural areas remain

limited to “pro-poor” emergency assistance measures based on limited funds largely provided by international institutions (see box below).

Attempts to finance social protection systems run up against difficult budgetary trade-offs, policy choices to cut taxes that are already applied regressively, and a lack of political will to make social protection a priority.

BOX – The issues and stakes of the extension of social protection in the Sahel : the case of Burkina Faso

The case of Burkina Faso shows both the complexity of and the high stakes involved in creating a coherent and wide-reaching social protection policy in the Sahel, and more generally in lower-income African countries. Social protection programmes have only very recently been incorporated in national law (the general framework in 2012 and the national universal health insurance fund in 2018). An extension of universal health insurance is being tested on a small scale in four regions of the country. The “Filets sociaux” (“Social Safety Nets”) project, the main national programme financed by the World Bank, guarantees cash transfers and related services to 100,000 beneficiaries in five regions. By comparison, in August 2021, Burkina Faso had nearly 1.5 million internally displaced people needing assistance. A unified national registry of vulnerable households is under development and as of mid-2021 covers a third of the country’s 351 municipalities (*communes*). However, there is little consensus over the government’s chosen targeting methods between the institutions that finance social protection programmes and those that implement them. Most programmes, and particularly the “Filets sociaux” project, use simpler targeting methods than those used for the unified national registry. The lack of decentralised social service units at the local level and the fragility and limited availability of public health and education services in rural areas remain major obstacles.

(This brief analysis is taken from the “Session extraordinaire de la cellule technique d’animation du système d’information sur le pastoralisme au Burkina Faso (SIP-BF)”, Ouagadougou, 11 February 2021).

1.2. Institutional approaches and debates around the extension of social protection

Social protection is broadly defined as: “*the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups.*” (Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment – in ILO and FAO, 2021: 29).

Consensus and divergence in approaches to the universal extension of social protection

While all actors in the sector state their commitment to universal access to social protection, the boundaries of institutional debates about extending social protection are drawn by two major approaches.

The first approach, promoted by the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO), is based on the universal right to social protection. Interventions aim to enshrine citizens' rights in national legislation², prioritise public investment and guarantee universal access to social protection using a life-cycle approach. This includes, on the one hand, social insurance schemes based on the principles of contribution and risk pooling (health insurance, pensions, agricultural insurance); and, on the other hand, non-contributory social assistance schemes aimed at certain categories of citizens, depending on their characteristics and their position in the life cycle (social pensions for the elderly, childcare allowances, disability pensions). The universal approach is sometimes criticised as being impractical and out of step with the urgency of the needs expressed on the ground³.

The second approach, primarily promoted by the World Bank prioritises non-contributory “*pro-poor*” social assistance schemes intended to contribute to a reduction in extreme poverty and to investments that encourage economic transition for the most disadvantaged (e.g. cash transfers, sometimes linked to training, productive inputs and access to microcredit, public works programmes). This approach focus on contingency support sometimes linked to emergencies and crisis response (“social safety nets” and “adaptive” social protection schemes⁴), rather than the universal nature of the life cycle approach and formalised citizens' rights⁵. It presupposes the development and implementation of targeting methods that can identify beneficiaries of social assistance (*Households Economy Analysis, Proxy Means Test*, etc.), reflecting budget constraints as much as the political visions and institutional cultures of the development organisations and the governments behind them. Critics of “pro-poor” approaches point to a range of issues that call into question their effectiveness and ethicality: high implementation costs; low predictive value of targeting methods and difficulties in updating data; high exclusion rate among eligible households, fuelling a feeling that public institutions act arbitrarily (Kidd, Gelders, Bailey-Athias, 2017).

Limitations of linear and mechanistic models of contemporary rural transformations in Africa

In their literature, development institutions often present contemporary rural transformations as linear, inevitable processes and social protection policies as a solution for those left behind. There is a major focus on structural changes at work in the South, with a vision presenting the development of industry and services as the likely and intended outcome of rural transformations (FAO, 2017). However, this trend does not seem to be widespread throughout the world, particularly in Africa⁶. In this perspective, social protection should enable the inclusion of certain sections of the rural population in this process, while keeping from

² International Labour Organization. R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).

³ On the debates in the development aid world around these broad approaches to social protection see for example Grain de sel n° 79. *Filets sociaux, des outils de résilience pertinents ?* <https://www.inter-reseaux.org/publication/n79-filets-sociaux-des-outils-de-resilience-pertinents/>

⁴ Defined as “an integrated approach that can help address the challenges of adaptation, resilience building and disaster and climate risk management for poor and vulnerable people” (World Bank, 2017).

⁵ While the International Labour Organization and the World Bank came together in 2015 to promote universal access to social protection, distinct approaches persist on the ground.

⁶ On this subject see the analysis of Dorin, B., Hourcade, J.C., and Benoit-Cattin, 2013. M. *A world without farmers? The Lewis path revisited*. Working Paper, CIRED.

absolute destitution those who cannot “benefit” from it (Kangansniemi, Knowles and Karfakis, 2020).

However, commonly used concepts such as “inclusive transformation” raise conceptual and analytical questions. For example, what kind of economic and agricultural models and food systems are used as the framework for these transformations and this inclusion? What degree of and criteria for diversity are envisaged and to what extent are the characteristics of pastoral populations considered? A focus on the household, conceived as the social unit of reference⁷, and a technicist approach to social change, ignore social and political dynamics, power relations and forms of alienation and resource concentration that underlie and shape contemporary rural transformations in Africa as elsewhere.

A large set of heterogenous factors (climatic and environmental dynamics, limited access to land, markets and inputs) are often generically evoked as the main determinants of poverty and malnutrition (Allieu and Ocampo, 2019), with little consideration of key aspects of agricultural, business and environmental policy. Their effects on different agricultural systems in relation to access to and renewal of land and resources, regional competitiveness and agricultural price volatility often seem overlooked.

1.3. Broadening the discussion and analysis of the conditions necessary for social protection and its possible futures

Recontextualising social protection in Africa and beyond the workforce

The dynamics at work in Africa have been shown to be complex, diversified and controversial underlining the infeasibility of development models that promote the spatial integration of territories and the standardisation of economic models and living conditions (Ferguson, 2005). This calls into question the universal framework of social promotion and inclusion through work, which is currently aligned with a political project based on functional and competitive integration within the market.

Furthermore, one of the defining features of the contemporary global economy is the significant portion of the world’s population whose resources are functional to the international capital while its labour is not (Li, 2017). Above all this analysis refers to the masses of rural people who are victims of enclosure of land and the commons, unfair competition from subsidised agricultural products, or land grabbing linked to environmental conservation (Li, 2010). These dynamics of resource alienation depend on conditions established by political choices informed by specific visions and consolidated interests. Resource alienation and precarious work has been identified as a current major trend in rural Africa (Chauveau, Grajales, Léonard, 2020; Lind, Okenwa and Scoones, 2020; Peluso and Lund, 2011), with regard not only to the intensive agricultural models typical of agribusiness and plantation

⁷ This however very rarely reflects the reality across the world, especially in rural Africa. See Ancey V., Freguin-Gresh S. 2015. Families, labor and farms. In: Sourisseau Jean-Michel (ed.). *Family farming and the Worlds to come*. Dordrecht: Springer, p. 57-69.

agriculture but also to technological development and globalised production chains and labour markets, affecting a range of economic sectors (for instance extractive industries) (Ferguson and Li, 2018: 2). This prompts a rethinking of the presumed universality of the welfare state systems and forms of social contract developed during the 20th century, particularly in Europe.

Such systems remain the primary benchmark for international development programmes promoting greater socioeconomic inclusion, social coverage, trust and social peace (Kidd et al. 2020). However, they were developed and implemented in specific historical, political and economic conditions which need to be taken into account. In Africa, from the 1950s onwards, measures supporting the families of urban workers, mainly in the public sector, were implemented with the aim of stabilising and upskilling the salaried workforce and fostering social consensus (Cooper, 2004). Only benefiting to a marginal portion of the working population, this type of welfare state, constructed on the European model, has had very little impact on African societies in general.

In Africa, the challenge is to develop social protection systems in settings where the activity of almost all workers falls under the vague category of “informal work”. In the face of structural underemployment and precarious work, the focus should be on how redistributive arrangements that do not rely on wage-labour could be developed and the range of opportunities to which they could give rise. Through an analysis of welfare systems in Southern Africa, Ferguson (2015) shows how arrangements such as cash transfers, can open the way for broader political demands and changes in the relationship between urban and rural citizens and the state. Such schemes, whenever unconditional and aiming for broad inclusion across the life cycle, can create a collective consciousness and fuel redistributive demands based on the right of all citizens to present themselves as legitimate “co-owners” of national wealth⁸.

Putting policy processes back at the centre of the development and analysis of social protection

In the absence of universal, ready-made solutions, social protection mechanisms can only be developed and analysed through an empirical effort to understand the dynamics at work around policies and processes, the demands that give rise to them and that they in turn generate, their effects on populations, and the changes that they produce. Such analyses are particularly important in a context of pervasive political crisis. For example, in the Sahel, the use of budgetary constraints as an argument against implementing public services and social protection policies is currently being challenged, given the exponential increase in the national defence budget in some countries, the proportion of national budgets dedicated to debt servicing, and the lack of democratic debate on the distribution and use of allocated resources⁹.

⁸ Ferguson includes case studies such as: campaigns for the use of a universal income for citizens to emancipate populations from binding power relations, mitigate inequality and promote social peace; proposals to use revenues from international greenhouse gas offsetting mechanisms to finance such schemes; national measures to tax extractive industries, and proposals for transnational taxation (2015: 191-217).

⁹ A regional coalition of civil society organisations is calling for a drastic shift towards more just and inclusive social and economic policies in order to rebuild relations between public authorities and citizens. See *The Sahel: What Needs to Change, Towards a new people-centred approach. Recommendations by the People's Coalition for the Sahel – April 2021.* <https://www.sahelpeoplescoalition.org/report-sahel-what-must-change>

1.4. Why is the case of pastoralism useful for thinking about the extension of social protection ?

Pastoralism is emblematic of the gap between public policies, production systems and African environments

Pastoralism is characterised by an ability to use mobility to exploit the effects of climatic variability on vegetation at multiple spatial and temporal scales (Krätli and Schareika, 2010). These characteristics are often overlooked by development policymakers. The case of pastoralism sheds light beyond its own subsector on little discussed yet key aspects of ongoing debates about contemporary transformations in rural Africa and public policies and services, including social protection.

Pastoralism suffers from the legacy of political perspectives that have seen it as archaic, unproductive, and environmentally destructive. This negative perception pertains more broadly to African small-scale farming systems. As such, pastoralism is illustrative of the significant gap between agricultural and environmental public policies, production systems and African environments. These policies were developed in the colonial period using concepts and practices based on inappropriate models of livestock production intensification. Climatic variability was seen as an anomaly rather than a structural characteristic of drylands. Recurrent droughts and their effects on vegetation were interpreted as the result of presumed environmental degradation, attributable to local practices. In the second half of the 20th century, this framework, in the form of the concept of desertification, was used to justify and promote a set of inappropriate and inequitable policies: large-scale irrigation development, expansion of cash monocrops, pastoral sedentarisation, and land grabbing in the name of agricultural development and nature conservation (Sayre, 2017; Davis, 2016). Public policies driving productive specialisation and land privatisation have led to the fragmentation of heterogeneous and complementary agroecological spaces and weakened political institutions allowing multiple and sequential access to strategic resources (Galvin et al. 2008; Casciarri, 2013). These policies have negatively affected African peasantries and have been particularly damaging to the environment and to pastoralism.

Renewed scientific approaches but strong policy continuity shaping social change

A now established scientific paradigm defines pastoralism as a specialised, evolving production system that brings ecological and economic benefits and represents a valid alternative to unsustainable artificial systems that consume too many inputs and resources (Krätli, 2015). This vision illustrates, through the example of pastoralism, the rise of alternative scientific, political and technical approaches to agricultural development, brought together under the broad umbrella of agroecology (FAO, 2021). This new paradigm goes beyond classic commodity chain approaches to question the supposed universality of the concepts and methodological tools of agricultural and zootechnical sciences (Krätli et al. 2015).

Despite these advances, there has been a surprising continuity in the implementation of agricultural, environmental and land policies in Africa, which persist in promoting the

privatisation of the commons, the concentration of the means of production, and growing inequalities between social classes, genders and generations, thereby fuelling exclusion and rural exodus (Chauveau, Grajales, Léonard, 2020; Peluso and Lund, 2011). These dynamics have powerful destructuring effects on African peasantries and make it more difficult for states to move towards food sovereignty. Drylands previously considered marginal are now prized, most notably for their land and mining resources (Lind, Okenwa et Scoones, 2020). This new land rush brings together urban and rural elites, including pastoralist elites, alongside public authorities, and international and national private interests. Fragmentation of spaces and appropriation of the commons are driving rapid change to the detriment of the majority of pastoralists. However, minorities can exploit strategic resources through political proximity, legal manipulation and economic possibilities, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the market integration of territories and pastoral production. Fault lines are also increasingly visible within pastoral societies themselves (Lind, Okenwa and Scoones, 2020). Different forms of specialisation or diversification are observed in East and West Africa (Catley, Lind, Scoones, 2013; Magnani, 2009). Catley (2017: 43) refers to “positive diversification” in relation to opportunities to save and potentially rebuild a viable herd size, and “negative diversification” in relation to low-paying, dangerous activities that maintain populations in a structural state of need. Access to “positive diversification” possibilities depends on financial means, such as funds to start a business, and a social network who can provide opportunities in urban areas and offer the support of a migration network to newcomers.

The impact of this profound social change is felt in the endogenous institutions governing security and social reproduction (resource sharing, social circulation of livestock, etc.), which are gradually weakening. The issues raised by this major trend go beyond the pastoral sector, inviting reflection on approaches to social protection based on citizens’ rights and on the conditions necessary for new forms of social contract between states and rural populations, in a context of political and economic crises in many rural areas in Africa.

2. Social protection in pastoralist settings

2.1. Endogenous institutions and redistribution: dynamic pastoral institutions

The political and ethical complexity of redistributive institutions

Peasant societies have often been stereotyped as places of unconditional consensus and sharing, reflecting simplistic conceptions of local “communities” and institutions that ignore their historical, political and social contexts (Mosse, 1999; Li, 2007).

Ferguson and Li (2018: 11-15) provide valuable analyses for understanding the political and ethical complexity inherent in endogenous redistributive networks and institutions. First, these institutions are built around values and conceptions of solidarity and reciprocity underpinned by mechanisms of enforcement and sanction, and not spontaneous and unconditional adherence. Secondly, the values and social obligations that underlie resource flows are linked to forms of social belonging (kinship, clientelism, alliances) that claimants must work to maintain. Thirdly, these values, obligations and codified forms of distribution and social belonging are dynamic and change with broader, and always specific, socioeconomic transformations, which therefore must be studied empirically. Migrations of varying length, with or without the possibility to return, economic changes affecting access to salaried work, policies affecting access to resources or the introduction of benefits for certain actors are all factors that reshape redistribution networks and the conditions under which different categories of people access them or are excluded from them.

Redistributive institutions in pastoralist settings

A review of research on redistribution practices in different pastoralist settings in East and West Africa¹⁰ reveals a wide range of institutions: various forms of social circulation of livestock within extended families and lineage groups (pre-inheritance, dowry, loans, gifts after a sudden loss of means of production, etc.); contributions for specific occasions such as weddings and funerals or for the care of vulnerable groups; collective and shared agricultural or pastoral work practices; forms of religious almsgiving (Ancey et al. 2008; Ali and Hobson, 2009; Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2013; Catley, 2017; Addis and Assefa, 2018).

These studies reveal a general weakening of these various institutions. For example, research in the Somali region of Ethiopia found a decline in the relative share of cash and in-kind gifts in poor households' incomes between 1998 and 2005, against a backdrop of recurrent droughts (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2013). There seems to have been an even steeper decline in forms of livestock circulation, such as *busa gonofa*, a form of organised giving practised within lineage groups by the Borana people in southern Ethiopia to help those who have lost their livestock

¹⁰ Conducted with Somali, Borana, Karrayu and Fulani populations.

to rebuild a herd (Catley, 2017: 27-28). Similar findings emerge from the study of endogenous social protection systems among Karrayu pastoralists in the Oromo region of Ethiopia (Addis and Assefa, 2018). While the reduced availability of livestock following droughts is often cited, growing socioeconomic inequalities and the market integration of the pastoral economy are also key factors, as forms of reciprocity and cooperation are less and less useful to wealthy families who can acquire exclusive resource use rights and easily call on family and hired labour. Furthermore, public welfare systems, where implemented, shape and are shaped by local redistributive institutions. Thus, on the one hand, cash/food for work schemes can weaken local practices of food sharing, livestock gifting and collective work, as in some pastoral regions of Ethiopia (Addis and Assefa, 2018). On the other hand, resources distributed through social protection schemes can feed into and circulate within local institutions, in line with their values, rationales and objectives, which are often at odds with the schemes' stated aims (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2013; Ferguson, 2015: 119-140). For example, hybrid management models of public and local schemes such as cash transfers, tontines and community-based women's mutual funds have in some cases helped to legitimise the collective use of allocated resources and to defuse tensions between family and gender groups (Olivier De Sardan et al., 2014). Another interesting example is the Zakat fund created in 2012 in Libya against the backdrop of political crisis and the breakdown of the Libyan social state. Established as an independent entity organised around a network of diverse actors including national governments, imams and local religious leaders, as well as young volunteer, the fund has been able to deliver effective aid, in line with socially shared and understandable moral principles, practices and forms of accountability, in a context of high political uncertainty and instability (Caravani et al. 2021).

Changes in the social circulation of livestock are useful indicators of contemporary transformations in pastoralists' societies, because of the central role that they play in their cultural, social and economic organisation, and particularly in the construction of close ties between human and animal social groups, animal selection and genetics, the appropriation and collective management of the herd, and the acquisition and transmission of specialised knowledge (Bonfiglioli, 1984; Bonfiglioli, 1988; Krätli, 2007; Krätli, 2008). A relatively recent study of Fulani pastoralists in the Ferlo region of Senegal (Ancey et al. 2008) points to shrinking networks and opportunities for the transfer of cattle, especially for daughters due to leave the family group. Short-term cattle loans occur within the relatively restricted social boundaries of the extended family. There is an increased desire for control as the pastoral economy is more strongly integrated within the livestock market, access to water and the systematic use of cattle feed are commodified to compensate for the loss of wetland pastures, and extended families are broken up and geographically dispersed.

This brief overview highlights the evolving nature of these redistributive social institutions in relation to the political, social, and economic changes affecting the lives of people who alternatively do or do not reproduce them, giving them new meanings and values.

2.2. Cash transfers: the new frontier of emergency response in rural Africa

The limits of conventional pastoral interventions

The history of the implementation of social protection schemes in African pastoralist environments is closely linked to emergency responses to catastrophic events, particularly droughts, with common actions including the distribution of food and feed, along with measures such as destocking and restocking herds or creating grain and feed banks. There are well-known weaknesses inherent in their implementation in such settings. Predictive and targeting mechanisms that aim to identify vulnerable households both geographically and by category do not reflect the characteristics of pastoral societies. Institutional settings such as Early Warning Systems operate mostly on the basis of indicators of grain accessibility and availability, as well as rainfall and biomass production forecasts, overlooking key information on pastoral mobility patterns and resource access rights (Ancey et al. 2009). Similarly, in targeting schemes livestock ownership is often seen as an exclusion criterion without consideration of the minimum livestock thresholds required for pastoralism, which vary according to context and the characteristics of different economic systems. Destocking and restocking measures require a strict timeframe, according to flexible and adapted criteria (species, sufficient numbers, breeds and quality of animals), and support measures (food aid, inputs), to be implemented over an adequate period of time to allow the reconstruction of viable economic systems (Devereux and Tibbo, 2013). There are often problems with access to food and feed supply measures, both because insufficient thought is given to the issue of pastoral mobility and above all because pastoralists are often marginalised within local and national political institutions.

Cash transfers: a wide variety of schemes and practices

To address these shortcomings and improve the impact of social protection measures, innovative programmes such as cash transfer schemes have recently been implemented in some settings, notably in the drylands of Kenya and Ethiopia. Olivier de Sardan and Piccoli (2018) highlight the great diversity of cash transfer schemes around the world. Whether targeted or universal, conditional or unconditional, state or non-state, developmental or humanitarian, the schemes are products of different political dynamics and have a range of different effects depending on how they are designed and implemented. Set against rising inequality, cash transfers can have a variety of objectives, from offering a short-term response to crises to promoting the development of social capital, the eradication of poverty, and the redistribution of national wealth. Besides limited coverage, the size of the transfers and the limits of state financing in Africa, the biggest problems relate to targeting methods and the conditions that are sometimes attached to the transfers. On the one hand, the constraints and criteria informing geographic and individual targeting are often misunderstood at the local level, whether quotas imposed on villages or definitions used to target categories of the population (Olivier de Sardan et al. 2014; Sabates-Wheeler, 2013; Lind et al. 2021). Adjustments are often made locally to both targeting processes and resource allocation (choice

of beneficiaries, forms of resource capture and resource pooling). On the other hand, the conditions often attached to transfers (educational, health and labour obligations, etc.) sometimes favour the reproduction of inequalities and forms of exclusion. Formal conditions reinforce the perception that public services are sometimes discriminatory, while informal conditions (corruption, abuse, etc.) can exacerbate this framework of constraints (Olivier de Sardan and Piccoli, 2018). These examples illustrate how conditional schemes run counter to a rights approach to social protection (section 1.2).

Contextualisation and improvements of cash transfer programmes in pastoralist settings

Two major large-scale cash transfer programmes have recently been implemented in African regions where pastoralism is an important economic activity: the Productive Safety Net Program (PNSP) in Ethiopia and the Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP) in Kenya.

In Ethiopia, the PNSP has been in place since 2005 as a joint initiative of the government and the World Bank. Designed to replace a multitude of pre-existing schemes providing food aid, the programme aims to promote livelihoods, prevent impoverishment and protect the poorest strata of the rural population from hunger. It encompasses a range of different support measures such as cash transfers, food aid or participation in public works and currently benefits around eight million people. Geographical targeting, based on emergency food aid information, is recalibrated annually and then more thoroughly every three/five years. Initially implemented in the mountainous regions of Ethiopia, the PNSP was extended to the pastoral drylands of Somali and Afar in 2009.

In Kenya, the HSNP was launched in 2009 to alleviate poverty and stimulate investment in four provinces in the country's drylands. It provides a cash transfer as well as other services to 100,000 households per year, selected using national census data (Janzen et al. 2016).

The extension of the PNSP into the Somali and Afar regions of Ethiopia illustrates the difficulties of implementing standardised development programmes in very different settings. Both are drylands where pastoralism is the dominant economic activity, Islam the main religion and tribal organisation a key political model. They have the highest levels of poverty in the country because of a combination of recurrent droughts over the last two decades, patterns of land grabbing, and rangeland and strategic wetland resources being given over to irrigated agriculture. In the face of strong population growth, livestock numbers are stagnating and becoming increasingly concentrated. International migration is increasingly common among young people and relations with public authorities are fraught (Catley, 2017; Fre and Dixon, 2019: 463-469).

Available studies (Sabates-Wheeler, 2013; Lind et al. 2018; Lind et al. 2021) report substantial adjustments in the implementation of the PNSP in these regions. Targeting procedures were initially ill-adapted to the realities of local populations, meaning that indicators (of non-agricultural income, household assets, etc.) had to be redefined after the start of the programme. While the exclusion rate has been reduced following these changes, it remains very high (around 50% of potential eligible beneficiaries, particularly women), mainly because of the mediation and patronage roles played by customary authorities. Transfers have been

diluted through forms of redistribution, for example because polygamy is not taken into account, or because quotas limit the inclusion of many eligible families. Finally, although complaints are rarely voiced, targeting procedures seem to have generated tensions within the affected groups. Recent research by Alene et al. (2021) shows how the PNSP has been an effective tool for extending state control and promoting the sedentarisation of Somali pastoralists. Targeting techniques have allowed for a reorganisation of local administrative units, with pastoral populations exclusively enrolled within the newly created districts. The conditions attached to aid measures, in particular obligations to participate in public works projects in one's "home" district and to use the newly built infrastructure (schools, water points), have led to a reorganisation of pastoral mobility practices and exerted additional pressure on the organisation of work and on families' labour resources, to the detriment of pastoral activities.

Different studies in Ethiopia and Kenya indicate similar findings about the effects and impacts of the PSNP and HSNP (Merttens et al. 2012; Catley, 2017; Addis and Assefa, 2018; Fre and Dixon, 2019). While positive impacts on food security, asset preservation and people's incomes have been documented, they appear insufficient to allow livelihoods to be rebuilt or, more notably, viable pastoral activity to be revived. Furthermore, improvements seem to be contingent on beneficiaries remaining within the programme over the long term. On leaving the scheme families are at high risk of falling back into a state of destitution.

In conclusion, a range of recommendations have been made to policy-makers and decision-makers: the integration in targeting and predictive schemes of indicators adapted to pastoral contexts (resource management regimes and access rights, mobility patterns and constraints, socioeconomic profiles of pastoral extended families, social and political organization); improvements to programmes such as increasing the value of transfers, extending the duration of beneficiaries' enrolment, combining different measures; a move towards universal schemes, unconditional or with conditionalities in line with pastoral productive strategies, to improve access for poorer pastoral populations without constraining family economic activities; substantial investment in broader economic development measures (business sectors, access to credit, etc.); supporting rather than repressing migration dynamics; significant changes to agricultural, land and environmental policies which currently penalise and discriminate against pastoralists in regions where pastoralism remains a suitable, potentially viable and profitable economic activity, and would in any case be hard to replace.

2.3. Livestock insurance: adaptation to pastoralism and accessibility for poorer pastoralists are major challenges

In Africa, to our knowledge, there are not yet any insurance-based and contributory social protection systems based on the recognition of the professional status of herder (innovative policies along these lines are being implemented in Mongolia with promising results which, if confirmed, would demonstrate the value and feasibility of this approach, see section 3.1).

However, there is growing interest in livestock insurance schemes among development actors. Two interesting projects, implemented in the Mongolian steppe and in the drylands of East Africa, offer a useful opportunity to think about the conditions necessary for the extension of these tools in Africa.

The first micro-insurance policies for livestock in a pastoralist setting were implemented in Mongolia in the mid-2000s (*Index-based Livestock Insurance*), on the joint initiative of the Mongolian government and the World Bank, to limit the impact of episodes of extreme cold on the national herd. An index is used based on average livestock mortality rates over the last eighty years, with insurance being triggered when the excess mortality rate exceeds 6%. Between 6% and 30%, payouts are made by private insurers in line with users' contributions. When mortality rates exceed this threshold, the state intervenes directly through a public disaster management fund. The scheme covers about 20,000 herders with positive results in terms of limiting the impacts of adverse weather events. However, because of the high cost, it is mostly used by medium to large livestock owners who can afford to move animals and pay for access to pastures and are thus less vulnerable to climate disasters than disadvantaged pastoralists (Greatrex et al. 2015).

Following the example of Mongolia, a livestock micro-insurance programme has been implemented in Kenya since the late 2000s as a result of collaboration between research and international cooperation institutions, private insurance companies, non-governmental organisations and the government. Up-scaled by the government in 2014 as the Kenya Livestock Insurance Program (KLIP), it is based on a model that combines statistical analysis of animal mortality data with estimates of plant biomass availability in given areas. The insurance scheme, which had 27,000 members in 2013, has shown success in preventing drops in livestock sales and supporting families' food intake (Janzen and Carter, 2013). However, coverage is limited to a few heads of livestock, which, together with the financial costs of the policy, would appear to make the scheme unsuitable for pastoralist families, particularly those with limited means.

Despite these encouraging results, a prospective study has expressed major reservations about the preconditions for extending livestock micro-insurance in Africa and adapting it to the needs of the more vulnerable fringes of pastoral societies (Thébaud, 2017). First, insurance tools depend on reliable data collection and statistical analysis over many years. Such data is often unavailable. Secondly, indices based on biomass estimates are ill suited to environments with high climatic and environmental variability and are therefore poorly predictive of impacts on mobile pastoral systems. Thirdly, the substantial public investment required to lower policy primes and generalise subscriptions, and thus make these systems accessible for poorer pastoralists, might not be justified for a number of reasons: under-investment and the widespread precarity of rural access to basic services which, if available, would have a significant positive impact; the priority of securing pastoral mobility and access to resources which are often compromised by political models and choices.

2.4. Education and health, the great “forgotten” items on political agendas

To conclude this section, we wish to emphasise the central need for public investment in the education and health of the population as an essential complement to an effective social protection policy. Despite more recent relative reinvestment, these sectors still suffer from the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s. The policy of “school massification” has often meant a decline in the status, skills and working conditions of teaching staff, and therefore in the quality of teaching and learning, leading to a proliferation of private fee-paying services at all levels.

As well as being central to social and economic development, these public services also play a decisive role in protecting rural populations against risks. Access to education is one of the determining factors in the success of emigration trajectories leading to a positive diversification of rural people’s economic strategies and activities (Getu and Devereux, 2013). Efficient and affordable health services are also of major importance for poor rural families, as they prevent the sudden loss of often scarce labour assets, or economic assets used to pay for healthcare. However, access to these services generally remains very precarious in rural Africa, especially for pastoralists.

Burkina Faso offers an illustrative case study in the field of education. The literacy rate of young people aged 15-24 is 49.9%. The figure is 77% in urban areas and only 33% in rural areas (INSD, 2015). Another major determining factor of territorial inequalities in the Sahel is the “school life expectancy” of pupils. In Burkina Faso, a child starting school in an urban area can expect to spend 11.5 years there, which is nearly 8 years longer than in rural areas, where the average is 3.6 years. In the regions of the country where pastoralism is a particularly important activity (Sahel and Est), overall literacy rates fall to around 30%. Similarly, the national rate for primary school attendance is 74%, but only 30% in the Sahel and Est regions. Among pastoral populations in the Est region, the school attendance rate is estimated at only 4% (Association pour la Promotion de l’Elevage au Sahel et en Savane and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2017). A range of constraints limits access to public education and vocational training services, including limited rural provision, high tuition fees for vocational curricula, and an insufficient number of scholarships and allowances which falls well short even of meeting just urban demand, meaning rural people are automatically excluded.

Besides economic and physical access constraints, the extremely low literacy and enrolment rates in pastoralist settings reflect the limited appeal of education systems that pastoralists often consider to be out of step with local culture, social organisation and economic systems. Krätli and Dyer (2009) highlight the main factors that hinder school access for mobile pastoralists: the populations’ fear that schooling desocialise children from their home environment with serious consequences for family cohesion and ties; changes in livestock management practices and the modification of mobility circuits, with important repercussions on the productivity and resilience of pastoral activities. A number of alternative education approaches and systems

have been tested in different pastoralist settings in both East Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Somalia) and West Africa (Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Togo), using a range of methods, including: adapting school education programmes to reflect the sociocultural and linguistic characteristics of pastoral groups and promoting a valorising vision of pastoralism and pastoralist culture; setting up multilocation facilities with semi-permanent centres located between pastoralists' home territories and strategic transhumant areas; creating alternative school curricula, equivalent to formal systems, which alternate face-to-face teaching and distance learning through the use of radio broadcasts, itinerant teachers, printed materials and audio files (Krätli, 2009; Siele et al. 2013; Magnani et al. 2020).

Similarly, the challenge in healthcare is twofold: to facilitate access to public health services in pastoralist societies and also adapt provision to ensure that services are truly intelligible, relevant and therefore effective in such settings. To this end, we will summarise the approaches that consider and treat human and animal health together, known under the broad heading of "One Health". Developed since the 2000s, these approaches recognise a strong link between the health of humans, animals and the environment, and have noted that: (i) pastoral populations are marginalised from basic health services, as evidenced by the very poor state of health of both humans and their livestock; (ii) the incidence of serious zoonotic disease is particularly high among pastoral populations; (iii) livestock keepers conceive of human and animal health in similar ways (Schelling et al. 2016), which largely determines their actions and their relationship to health systems. The different cultures and forms of social organisation at work are thus crucial and must be understood by the actors involved in such systems. As such, approaches inspired by the "One Health" concept promote transdisciplinary exchanges between medical and social sciences and an inclusive attitude to the knowledge and practices both of public health professionals and institutions and of local sociotechnical networks (Abakar et al. 2016).

Several interventions based on these approaches have been implemented over the past decades, generally deploying mobile mixed medical and veterinary teams along the mobility routes of pastoral populations. Trained community members are responsible for communicating information, providing routine care and distributing basic medicines between the teams' rounds. The results are impressive: access to care, vaccination coverage rates, epidemiological surveillance and the use of pharmaceutical drugs have all improved significantly. These initiatives are popular with marginalised populations, who regard the provision of a health system for their benefit as a tangible sign of their citizenship being recognised. Regular visits from health workers, together with their credibility, courtesy and language skills, all help to inspire confidence in the system and in the care provided and encourage mutual learning and hybridisation between scientific and community knowledge. While a mobile health team of this kind is more expensive to run than a fixed health centre, with costs estimated in certain settings and conditions to be around €30,000 per year (Tourette-Diop, Ragounandea, 2010), it provides much greater geographical coverage. Furthermore, delivering human and animal health services jointly, for example during vaccination campaigns, is both good practice medically and a way of achieving substantial savings compared to traditional interventions (VSF, 2015, 2016).

Despite their generally promising results, these various alternative approaches to education and public health are rarely sustainably integrated into public action programmes in Africa, but rather remain restricted to development projects with limited and intermittent geographical coverage and timeframes.

3. Avenues for defining an alternative agenda

3.1. Promote an extension of universal social coverage as part of a renewed social contract based on established forms of solidarity

The case of pastoralism shows the urgency of reformulating the terms of institutional debates around the extension of social protection in the South. Tying social protection agendas to crisis response is problematic because poverty and vulnerability in rural Africa are more linked to structural, political, economic and social factors than to short-term hazards. The track record of emergency interventions in pastoral areas reveals their inadequacy in addressing the current challenges of reducing inequality, promoting social peace, and preserving livelihoods and productive capacities.

The recommendations identified in the literature review suggest relaxing, simplifying and adapting targeting methods to pastoral contexts, promoting unconditional or low-conditional transfer schemes to facilitate access and avoid constraining productive strategies, increasing the value of transfers, implementing support schemes over a longer timeframe, and ensuring more structural economic investments and broader support measures in the targeted regions.

This approach must aim not only to prioritise cash transfers, but to consider the full range of social protection tools to enable universal coverage, extended to pastoral populations. These findings and recommendations all point to the importance of developing social protection policies that are enshrined in law and that aim for broad and inclusive coverage. Various concrete examples exist both within and beyond Africa. In Mongolia, where pastoralism is a historically important activity that is central to the culture and imagination of the nation, the policy choice has been to facilitate access to the national contributory social insurance system. The state has recognised herders' professional status, thereby facilitating their voluntary participation in existing contributory schemes (a universal social insurance system, guaranteeing for example child and maternity allowances, and a retirement savings scheme) through accommodations such as subsidies to reduce contributions and flexible payments adapted to the pastoral calendar and pastoral incomes. A decentralised system for the delivery of social protection benefits, measures allowing officials to travel to pastoralists, and the implementation of a system of mobile multiservice units have significantly raised awareness and increased take-up. The success of this approach is dependent on a number of conditions, such as the implementation of a social dialogue that involves pastoral populations in the decision-making process, the existence of a contributory social insurance scheme adaptable to rural realities, the recognition of a specific professional status for rural workers, and awareness among pastoralists of their rights as citizens to social protection and of the functioning of bureaucratic systems.

An alternative but complementary approach would be to extend the programmes already implemented in several Southern African countries, such as the system of cash transfers

allocated to certain categories of the population at different stages of the life cycle (the elderly; mothers, so as to benefit their children; people with disabilities). These unconditional transfer schemes target a broad base of low-income people through simple administrative procedures to allow claimants to register and declare their income, and then calculate their level of poverty. This is designed to identify and exclude the “haves” rather than exclusively sort and select those in extreme poverty. Targeting and implementation costs are therefore greatly reduced, and transfers, even of modest value, have had significant success in emancipating certain categories of the population, reducing inequalities, and creating a climate of consensus that helps to rebuild relations between public institutions and citizens, provided that investments are also made in universally accessible public health and education infrastructures.

3.2. Promote social protection systems consistent with food systems and agricultural and fiscal policies

The literature review of interventions must not obscure two fundamental dimensions of social protection policy choices: processes of negotiation around dynamics of redistribution and coherence with productive sectors.

It is urgent to break the conceptual and practical deadlock that has resulted from claims that it is impossible to fund social protection systems in Africa and that there is an inevitability to the forms that public policies take. The processes of negotiation around dynamics of redistribution refer to political choices over taxation, resource tracking and trade-offs regarding resource use. Several options at the national or international level range from taxing extractive industries nationally and introducing more progressive tax regimes, to taxing revenues from international greenhouse gas offsetting mechanisms or proposals for transnational taxation. These choices fall within the prerogatives of states in the spheres of national and international governance and pertain to moral and political obligations to protect citizens’ livelihoods which are every bit as legitimate as other trade and financial obligations that are generally considered to be non-negotiable.

The conditions necessary for social protection systems and their possible futures in Africa, and in particular in rural and pastoral areas, are thus closely linked to political processes of conflict, compromise and negotiation between divergent interests at different scales. As such, national processes that promote equity, citizens’ rights and public services, and social and economic justice need to be supported to complement the technical data provided to inform decision-making. Analysing dynamics of resource redistribution would shed light on the conditions of emergence of new forms of social contract in different settings and on the links between interdependent political and spatial realities. Moreover, it would help to define an active role for international organisations in negotiation processes around redistributive policies.

Improving the coherence between social protection policies and the productive sectors, particularly the agricultural sector, is a prerequisite to sustainably protect and strengthen the

livelihoods and very existence of peasant societies, and to support the transformation of food systems. This is essential to meet the challenges of democratising and legitimising public institutions, reducing inequalities, and promoting both food sovereignty and rural social and economic development, especially as the scale of climate change increasingly lays bare the fragility of economic models based on the intensive use of resources in long and fragmented production chains. The most marginalised pastoral populations are emblematic of this need for inclusion in renewed public policies and for coherence between different policy sectors, in order to shield them from changes that sometimes call into question their very survival. These major transformations are linked to growing economic inequalities, the commodification of the pastoral economy, and the privatisation of access to resources, which all serve to undermine the value of certain forms of reciprocity and redistribution.

3.3. Promote public action to integrate social protection policies into the fabric of endogenous redistributive institutions

There is strong interest within the social protection sector in endogenous redistribution institutions, which are seen as intermediaries that can in certain situations compensate for the limitations and weaknesses of public authorities and administrations. However, this risks them being perceived as merely infrastructures for channelling material aid. Local societies and institutions are not fixed functional organisations for equitable sharing. In pastoralist settings as elsewhere, they are indeed “places” of solidarity and reciprocity, but also of competition and exclusion, with participation based on values and forms of social belonging and on dynamic and changing mechanisms of control and sanction. There is therefore a danger of reproducing static and ahistorical conceptual frameworks that ignore the dynamics of change in societies and institutions, which can mean ignoring both the characteristics and modes of operation of the institutions in question (what is shared? by whom and how? what legitimises these processes?), and their transformations in relation to public policies and forms of governance on a wider scale. These twin blind spots can lead either to public authorities simply absolving themselves of their responsibilities, or to anachronistic attempts at regeneration that overlook the political factors behind the processes that are destructuring local institutions.

The general trend towards weakening redistributive institutions in pastoralist areas and rural Africa over recent decades (Swift, 1993) calls into question the capacity of public institutions and public action to “preserve” the potential for relative social cohesion and protection inherent in local redistributive institutions. These examples identify some of the conditions necessary for the preservation of the social fabric, which is now extremely fragile in many rural areas: fully funded national agricultural, environmental and commercial policymaking that supports peasant agriculture, and furthermore the development of structured and protective regional policies; legislative, judicial and political support for proven forms of natural resource management, such as shared and complementary access, integration of spaces; a curb on

dynamics of enclosure and land grabbing through legislative, regulatory and economic measures.

In the current context of severe constraints on African peasant societies, resource privatisation and the resulting forms of exclusion and alienation, there is an urgent need to study how non-market forms of exchange of goods and services are being reorganised and reinstitutionalised within rural societies, and the tensions and opportunities they bring for the majority of marginalised rural people (Scoones, 2021). As such, the challenge is to create viable public action mechanisms capable of effectively guiding the processes underway with the aim of promoting social justice, reducing economic inequalities and building new forms of participation and political legitimacy. To this end, it is essential to generate specific and contextualised knowledge to define flexible approaches to “steering” processes to adapt social protection systems to conditions on the ground, with a view to their interaction with local social and political institutions governing resource redistribution. In order to implement hybrid management models between public programmes and local institutions, major changes are required in the ways in which public action is organised and delivered. It is essential to promote adaptive and processual forms of learning and decision-making in locally anchored horizontal networks where responsibility and accountability are properly shared, and which require a high degree of organisational and financial flexibility to function (Caravani et al. 2021).

Conclusion

Universal access is a stated objective for all actors working in the field of social protection, and the many assistance and social insurance schemes in rural Africa point to the growing interest of public authorities and international development aid institutions. However, an evaluation of programs implemented in pastoral settings underlines shortcomings in their design and delivery, which can be explained by an analysis of the backgrounds to the interventions and the contexts in which they were implemented.

1) Interventions in the African drylands are increasingly focused on emergency aid, even though the distinction between relief interventions following shocks and crises, and structural measures for economic and social development have become increasingly blurred. Efforts to increase the social coverage of rural populations are often focused on improving crisis resilience, and still rarely on integrating these populations into social insurance systems adapted to their conditions as workers and citizens. In Ethiopia and Kenya, social assistance programmes have had positive impacts on food security, asset preservation and incomes, which nevertheless appear insufficient for livelihoods to be rebuilt.

2) The integration of rural populations into the market through growth sectors of the economy is held up as a route out of poverty for the majority, resulting in targeted social and agricultural insurance schemes for these groups, with social assistance reserved for the most vulnerable. Thus, livestock insurance schemes implemented in Mongolia and Kenya do not address the needs of the most vulnerable groups in pastoral populations. The narrative of structural transformations ultimately delivering increased welfare for the majority through widespread inclusion in the market economy is systematically contradicted by the facts. In reality, the dynamics at work in Africa reveal complex, diversified scenarios that necessitate a rethinking of the transposition of welfare state models and forms of social contract. Contrary to the narrative of successful market integration, across different pastoralist settings in East and West Africa, diverse institutional forms of solidarity underpinned by mechanisms of control and sanction and linked to forms of affiliation to social groups, are now weakening in the face of the major breakdown of rural societies.

3) Finally, the majority of social assistance and insurance schemes in African rural areas are funded by external aid. It is necessary to articulate social protection and agricultural and fiscal policy options within a democratic debate on the development of productive resources and the allocation of budget resources. Adapted and effective public health and education services need to be provided to support social protection programmes and maximise their impact. Alternative approaches have been implemented to this end over the last decades with promising results, they though are not yet sufficiently integrated into public action programmes, remaining restricted to development projects with limited and intermittent geographical coverage and timeframes.

The case of pastoralism in Africa calls for a new social contract between historically marginalised populations and public authorities. Pastoralists are among the fringes of rural

societies with the least social protection coverage. To sustain these production systems, a social contract enshrined in law should be the basis of replacing a narrative of vulnerability with one policy of public interest founded on reciprocal duties and services.

In Africa, the challenge is to develop social protection systems in settings where the activity of almost all workers falls under the vague category of “informal work”. An empirical understanding of the dynamics underpinning social protection policies is particularly important in the context of pervasive political crisis. Negotiation processes around redistributive dynamics and coherence with productive sectors are two fundamental aspects of social protection policy choices. The first refers to political choices over taxation, resource tracking and trade-offs regarding resource use. The second, improving coherence between social protection and other policy sectors, is a prerequisite for protecting and strengthening the livelihoods and very existence of peasant societies, and for supporting transformation of food systems that is at the height of the contemporary global challenges of sustainability and equality.

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