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**Assessing the policy frame in pastoral
areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)**

Michele Nori

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Abstract

Drylands cover about 40 per cent of Africa's land mass, mostly along the belt that includes the Sahel region on the western flank and the Horn of Africa on the eastern. These are home to tens of millions of pastoralists, for whom small ruminants, cattle, and camels provide a main source of livelihood. The region is characterised by marked rainfall variability and intense environmental change; the increasing economic and institutional uncertainties associated with the penetration of the market economy and the incorporation of grazing lands into the wider political and commercial arena also impinge on the livelihoods of herding communities.

Extensive livestock production contributes significantly to local food security, national economies and regional integration, and shapes the socio-cultural patterns of distinct communities. However, the recent history of policy development in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is one of misplaced modernisation efforts, and dispossession and dislocation of pastoralists. Most policies, laws, investments and programmes have failed to harness the potential of pastoral systems, instead engaging in dismantling the mobility practices and social networks that make them viable. The marginalisation of pastoralists in national politics and mainstream society is evident in most SSA countries; poverty rates are higher, while levels of investment and service provision are often much lower than the national average.

Despite growing calls for change, inclusion and investment, the situation in most of sub-Saharan Africa's drylands has worsened, and prospects for development have given way to humanitarian and security crises. There is growing political will, scientific literature and civil society efforts to overcome misconceptions and mistakes. However, translating good intentions and innovative thinking into effective institutional arrangements and governance practices seems challenging, as in most SSA countries the policy framework dealing with pastoral areas remains entangled in poor understanding, biased perspectives, bureaucratic approaches, and distorted interests.

Keywords

Pastoralism; uncertainty; food security; Sahel; Horn of Africa; drylands

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Yabelo, Ethiopia. Credit: M. Nori, Pastres.

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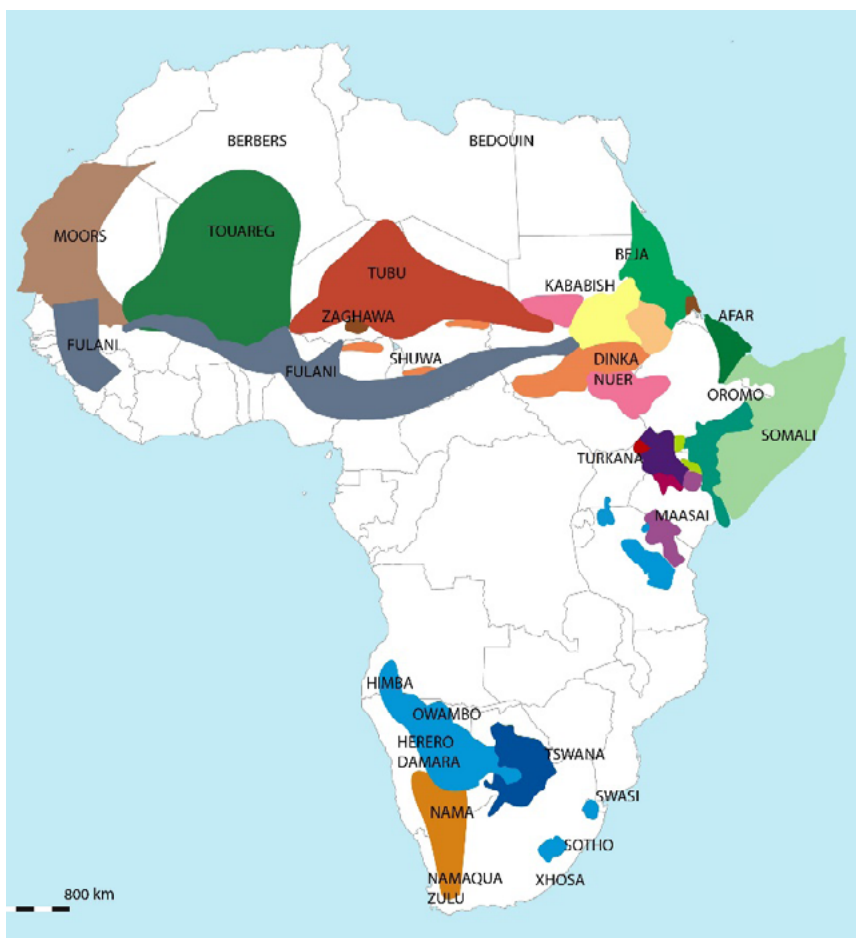
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A vast dryland belt¹

Drylands cover about 40 per cent of Africa's land mass, mostly along the belt that includes the Sahel region on the western flank and the Horn of Africa on the eastern, extending from Somalia to Mauritania, but also further south, from Namibia to Mozambique. Pastoral livestock production systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are mostly found in these vast arid and semi-arid areas where raising small ruminants, cattle, and camels provides a main source of livelihood to inhabiting communities. In this paper we will look specifically at the Sahel and Horn of Africa, where the large majority of SSA herders live and thrive. The agro-ecology of these regions is characterised by marked rainfall variability and associated uncertainties in the spatial and temporal distribution of water resources and grazing for animals. Pastoralism is practised by diverse communities, in different ways, but mostly through patterns and principles showing high degrees of similarity and convergence (Nori, 2021).

AU in 2010 estimated pastoralists in Africa at 268 million, generally living in isolated and remote areas, often close to borders and frontiers; their culture, products, and services are key features of African drylands. Apart from contributing to ensure food security and economic development at the national level, the trade of livestock supplied by pastoralists is often a significant source of export revenue and main driver of regional integration and stability (AU, 2010; Catley, 2017; FAO, 2018).

Picture 1 – Distribution and diversity of pastoral groups in Africa



Source: own adaptation from Homewood and Randall, 2008

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Table 1 – Contribution of the ruminant sector to GDP and agriculture

	Contribution to GDP (%)	Contribution to agricultural GDP (%)
Burkina Faso	9,28	30,13
Nigeria	6,23	16,18
Senegal	6,39	31,93
Rest of WAfrica	2,99	12,30
Ethiopia	8,26	19,53
Kenya	5,44	20,78
Tanzania	7,59	24,55
Rest of EAfrica	5,39	39,24

Source: De Haan, 2016

Despite these impressive features and figures, governments generally remain blinkered to the economic relevance of pastoralism. Most policies, laws, investment and programs have poorly served herding economies and failed to harness their potential, engaging instead in dismantling the mobility patterns and social networks that make them viable. Pastoralists' marginality in national policies and mainstream society is evident in most SSA countries. Service provision in drylands is usually much less developed than in other areas, with lower health and education indicators than national figures, while poverty rates are inexorably – fair indicators of the limited degree of economic investment and social integration (Hesse and MacGregor, 2006; Odhiambo, 2006; Wane, 2006; Catley and Aklilu, 2010). As acknowledged by the African Union, African governments do not invest in pastoral areas *'in a manner that is at least proportional to the economic importance of pastoralism'* (2010:29).

Sub-Saharan African drylands are simultaneously affected by the interconnected effects of shifting agro-ecological and socio-economic landscapes that result from – and contribute to – ever-changing policy agendas and market evolutions. Much like in other pastoral regions of the world, dryland livelihoods are intensely reshaped by population growth, climatic and environmental changes, the encroachment of external forces and interests, and broader institutional reconfigurations. In turn, these processes are linked to the broader incorporation of rangelands in wider political and trade arena. Their increasing interdependency with other regions and systems result in processes of commoditisation, privatisation, individualisation, migration, and social differentiation as well as new forms of accumulation, investment, and exploitation (Catley et al., 2013; Nori, 2019; Scoones, 2021).

Despite common patterns, the conditions under which herders operate in the Sahel and Horn regions differ: pastoralism formally enjoys a longstanding and fairer recognition and appreciation throughout the Sahelian setting, while the situation is much more controversial in the Horn of Africa. This is probably due to different historical patterns as well as the diverse socio-political fabric, which is more homogeneous in West Africa compared to the Eastern flank (see Picture 1). These diversities have led to quite distinctive evolutions of regional policy frameworks, including on the control of rangeland resources as well as on the opportunity to avail of cross-border moves and exchanges. To unravel the underpinning factors and explore the potential implications, in this paper we will try to address the common trends and the different sub-regional specificities as well as how these are reflected in the political framework that has developed to govern these territories.

Misplaced modernization efforts

In the latter twentieth century, most development interventions and investments in pastoral settings aimed to maximise the economic benefits of the livestock production system by trying to unlock drylands productive potentials using technological advances (Gebremeskel et al., 2019). Where farming schemes for cotton, sugarcane, groundnut, and rice did not directly encroach on rangelands, investments in livestock addressed mainly animal health, genetic improvement, water development, and forms of controlled grazing such as ranching schemes and enclosures, as well as support to livestock commercialisation. The relationships amongst herds, communities, and rangelands were reconfigured under conventional principles rooted in, on one hand, the idea of carrying capacity, whereby stocking rates need to be limited to increase productivity per unit of land or animal, and on the other hand, expanding livestock and rangeland productivity through technical innovations.

Table 2 – The reconfiguration of pastoral systems according to conventional development

Land	Livestock	People
Unlocking the productive potential <i>Mise en valeur</i>	Enhance market offtake	Inefficient and destructive
Stabilise production through water development and ranching schemes	Stabilise supply through animal health and genetics	Stabilise communities through sedentarisation, villagisation, and value chain governance
State ownership, exclusive access, and private control Production intensification	Growing integration into national markets Also taxation	Settlement, though often with inadequate investments in basic facilities and services

BOX – Stabilising meat and milk production in Ferlo, Senegal

International organisations have played an important role in complementing policy efforts to stabilise and regulating pastoralists, often with a view to enhance the offtake of their products. World Bank programmes in the Sahel heavily financed schemes aimed at enhancing meat availability. In Ferlo region, Senegal, main investments aimed to intensify and specialise livestock production through ranching, breeding programmes, and fattening projects in peri-urban settings with agro-industry by-products as feed (i.e. cottonseed, sugarcane residues) or through fodder production. The overall package also involved the regularisation of herders' organisational arrangements, through *Groupements d'Interet Economique* (GIEs), which provided the institutional fit to engage with State agencies, infrastructure management, and with the animal health system which was being privatised as well as the evolving credit system.

Other initiatives undertaken by European agencies in the same region have aimed to support the intensification of milk production. As the river valley was steered towards irrigated agriculture, local pastoralists excluded from grazing resources had to reconfigure their seasonal transhumance. They were thus 'stabilised' in the hinterland, where they settled around boreholes, moving in the dry season, when the pastures around nearby boreholes got progressively exhausted. To compensate for low-quality resources and frequent scarcity, pastoralists are forced to turn to expensive industrial cattle feeds, with

relevant consequences on herd management as well as their socio-economics (Magnani, 2016).

Within this context, an industrial dairy was established in 2006 to collect pastoral milk in the area. The dairy provided feed inputs on credit to stabilise milk production throughout the year so to limit the variation in volumes collected. The system proved unviable for pastoralists during the dry season, as revenues from milk sales cannot cover the cost of the cattle feed. Nevertheless, pastoralists adapted losses in the dry season to the benefits of milk sales during the rainy one, and reconfigured herd mobility and household dynamics with a view to make use of the evolving opportunities (ibidem).

Ending pastoral mobility, settling pastoralists around permanent water points, feeding animals through crops and promoting exotic breeds posit the need to reduce livestock interactions with the environment, so to overcome the climatic and ecological variability of semi-arid habitats with a view to stabilise and increase pastoral production (Magnani 2016). These conflicting principles showed high degrees of inconsistency with those informing traditional pastoral practices, which aim to optimally benefit from the high variability in pasture and water availability through a set of operating principles (Roe, 2019; Nori, 2021).

BOX – Pastoral hydraulics

Cement infrastructure and mechanised pumps removed seasonal limitations in water availability and contributed to forms of agricultural intensification and of livestock commercialisation. The constant evolution of water schemes profoundly reconfigured access to grazing resources, with important implications for natural resource management and governing patterns. When poorly-designed development interventions introduced 'public' access to water, the use of surrounding grazing resources got detached from the underpinning socio-political arrangements (Thébaud and Batterbury, 2001; FAO-CIRAD, 2012; AFD, 2013; Magnani et al., 2019). In the attempt to 'fix' variability through wells and stabilise livelihoods accordingly, these development interventions led to a major restructuring of pastoral practices and local livelihoods, as herding communities gradually settled more or less permanently the vicinity of wells and close to rangelands now 'open' throughout the year.

In Senegal Ferlo region, the number of motorised wells more than doubled between 1990 and 2000 (FAO-CIRAD, 2012). In the Somali ecosystem the evolution of the *berkaad* technology (i.e. cement tanks) has been a main driver of environmental change, providing the transmission chain between livestock trade and rangeland privatisation. In Borana drylands, the uncontrolled evolution of water infrastructure has represented a major challenge to the customary *deedha* rotational grazing system. Throughout SSA, many of these schemes have triggered environmental degradation and increased social tension (Gomes, 2006; Nori, 2010; Catley et al., 2013; AFD, 2013; De Haan, 2016).

More controversial perspectives have though in fact been evolving since the 1970s. A growing number of social scientists addressed the societal functioning of pastoral systems, but in ways often unconnected and unrelated to development policies and interventions (i.e., ILCA work on 'systems' from the 1970s). These endeavours were later complemented by the elaboration of the New Range Ecology paradigm, which fostered better understanding of the pastoral institutional setting and its consistency in managing and governing rangeland ecosystems under conditions of variability (Behnke and Scoones, 1993; Scoones, 1994). In such perspective pastoral mobility is a strategic

choice to harness environmental diversity in spatial and time scales with the aim of exploiting a range of different pastures at the optimum stage of their growth and over a longer period, than in stable and homogenous climatic conditions. Local breeds perform better in such demanding conditions as they have been selected on their ability to move distant and withstand periods of undernutrition without danger (Krätli and Schareika, 2010).

Despite these scientific advancements, conventional policy and investment frameworks have continued pursuing stabilising, controlling, and reorganising pastoralists production as well as living and marketing modalities and patterns – instead of appreciating pastoralists' performative capacities under current conditions. The outcome was unsurprising, as the pastoral sector has experienced the greatest concentration of failed development projects in the world: for most herders, neither productivity nor income improved; for most rangelands, the sustainable capacity to produce useful browse and graze was not enhanced, and, for most donor and lending agencies, anticipated financial rates of return were not achieved (Waters-Bayer & Bayer, 1994; de Haan, 1994; Nori, 2010). Apart from technical misfits and disappointing results, what is even more striking is the lack of concern for involving pastoral communities, their skills and agency in local development. Needless to say, the regard for indigenous knowledge and customary institutions was nil (Gebremeskel et al., 2019).

BOX – World Bank engagement in pastoral development

World Bank investment in pastoral areas from the 1960s to 1990s had four main phases:

- i) The ranching phase (mid-1960s to early 1980s). This was characterised by the transfer of Western ranching technologies to tropical areas. There was heavy capital investment in fencing, water development, developing exotic breeds, etc. Examples were ranching projects in Kenya, Botswana, and Yemen.
- ii) The Range/Livestock Project (mid-1970s to late 1980s). This focused on developing communal areas and securing grazing land rights adjudication. This involvement saw the development of group ranches in countries like Kenya.
- iii) Pastoral Association development (early to mid-1990s). Here emphasis was on the development of overall policy frameworks to secure mobility and flexibility in grazing rights. Water projects were developed and handed over to the community for management.
- iv) Integrated Natural Resource Management (mid- to late 1990s). This phase emphasised support to private institutions for the provision of services and management of resources, through specific incentives and institutional frameworks.

A review of all the phases shows that first-generation projects produced disappointing results. The second- and third-generation projects produced mixed performances. In general, however, all fell short of expectations. The failure of these initiatives affected World Bank investment policy in pastoral areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Bank reduced its investment in pastoral areas of Africa by half. By the 1990s, only a handful of projects with smaller pastoral development components were being implemented in Kenya and Mali. Funding for pastoral development in other areas was stronger, including in Asia, the Middle East, and North America, but the total fell from \$150m a year in the 1980s to \$50m in the 1990s, with less than half being directed to Sub-Saharan Africa (Odhiambo and Sar Shadrack, 2009 - adapted from de Haan, 1993).

Post-independence nation-states showed very little innovativeness in reinstating that modernisation was to be pursued by means of enhanced livestock productivity and commercialisation through pastoralists' sedentarisation, fencing their lands, controlling their herds, and increasing integration of their economies into national markets and regional trade (Odhiambo and Sar Shadrack, 2009; Nori, 2021). This strategy also proved instrumental in legitimising the new ruling groups loyal to the State in territories and communities that traditionally escaped centralised control.

Important drought events, social tensions, and evident degradation of range resources in certain areas paved the way for the 1977 UN International Conference on Desertification to provide further legitimisation for policies and programmes aimed at redressing extensive mobile livestock-keeping towards more 'rational and sedentary' systems, by blaming ongoing degradation processes on pastoral practices (Swift, 1996; Fratkin, 1997). This desertification narrative has accompanied and permeated technical as well as political discourses for decades, undoubtedly contributing to associating herding to rangeland degradation in society mindset; this view persisted even when it was recognised that pastoralists were primary victims of climate change impacts (Leach and Mearns, 1996; Nori and Davies, 2007; Lind et al., 2016). States, donor agencies and international policy agendas allied in pushing the conversion of pastoral territories and livelihoods. This process was particularly intense in eastern Africa, through villagisation schemes in Ethiopia, land privatisation amongst Maasai in Kenya, and land gazetting and forced mobility reduction in Uganda, and is also visible in more recent programs, such as the Great Green Wall as part of the recent climate finance mainstream.

BOX – Great Green Wall

As mobile livestock are considered dangerous for rangeland ecosystems, the best way to 'prevent the expansion of the Sahara' is planting a vast wall of trees across 11 African countries, stretching from Senegal to Djibouti. Major criticisms of the plan address the limited sensibility for both ecological and socio-economic considerations. The key issue is again one of a sedentist vision that hinges on tree plantings to stabilise an ecosystem that is by nature variable, whereas a non-equilibrium perspective would rather indicate a more mobile perspective on the environment and making use of variability, including through livestock. Once it is recognised that the Sahara extension depends largely on macro climatic factors, rather than on local practices – for about two-thirds, according to UNCCD (2014) – it should be accepted that the challenge is not rolling back the Sahara by building barriers against deserts and fixing boundaries/tenures, but rather but recognising non-equilibrium dynamics and responding to the embedded variability.

The massive and costly – and probably ineffective Great Green Wall – is just another large investment scheme that satisfies donors and governments rather than local communities, who are by the way already behind most of the localised and tailored afforestation and agro-forestry schemes. Its limited advancements receive massive funding and provide a glamorous picture of the ways misinformed environmental narratives feed exogenous policy interests, which limitedly include locals' concerns and do not effectively tackle their livelihood needs.

Sub-Saharan Africa drylands, already stressed by the impact of dramatic droughts, also paid their toll to the neo-liberal policy agenda in the 1990s. Vast and remote territories with a limited and scattered populations implied too high investment costs for a presumably limited political return. Structural adjustment programs led to a scaling down of public investment in remote drylands areas and the drastic reduction of many essential services for pastoralists by the central State, including, in most countries, the privatisation of animal health and veterinary care (IFAD, 2004; Rass, 2006).

Cutbacks in public funding and the disengagement of formal institutions in remote and low-density areas challenged the post-colonial paradigm, whereby the central state provided support to drylands populations through infrastructure investment, primary services delivery, and assistance programmes. Along with austerity, the waning presence of an already-weak State in its peripheral territories fostered an overall feeling of abandonment and marginalisation, generating a political and economic vacuum that other interests, actors, and organisations have eventually filled (Bonnet et al., 2010; Nori, 2019b). This evolving set-up severely endangered the accountability of the central State and its loyalty by local populations.

From the local perimeter to the global arena

The new millennium brought important evolutions in the SSA policy agendas and institutional architecture. On one hand, the processes of national democratisation, power devolution, and forms of decentralisation provided room for reconfiguring power relationships and the social contract between different communities and the State. On the other, upscaling regional integration and evolving transnational networks have reconnected territories, providing for new opportunities and exchanges and the emergence of new interests and relationships (Nori, 2019b).

This new institutional environment has raised opportunities for pastoralists engagement in the policy arena, through either parliamentary groups (in East Africa) or civil society organisations (in West Africa). More inclusive paradigms in theory entail more localised decision-making and legitimisation of customary governance systems, recognising the effectiveness of mobility and the need to protect pastoral commons (Niamir-Fuller, 1999; Toure, 2004). These openings are also used by elites to seize power at the local level, to engage in state and donor investments; in several settings these dynamics reinforced the social and economic marginalisation of certain pastoral groups and strata, as sedentary populations or wealth pastoral elites opportunistically took better advantage of the new political configuration (Nori et al., 2008; Faye, 2008; Mohamadou, 2009; IOM, 2019; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020).

Decentralisation processes saw the light in Sahelian countries in the 1990s, parallel to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, somehow contributing to legitimising State disengagement from dryland territories. Within the framework of decentralised natural resource management, the political and legal recognition of pastoral institutions including mobility, had its momentum with the issuing of the Pastoral Codes. Mauritania (2000), Mali (2001), Burkina Faso (2003), and Niger (2010, following the 1993 Rural Code) have all put forth a '*Code Pastoral*' to systematise and regulate pastoral land use through adequate recognition and legal protection of customary tenure arrangements that take into account modern legislation addressing individual and group-specific rights. Senegal and Chad are proceeding along the same way, though at a different pace. The support provided by international organisations to the process is not negligible. Similar processes have been tested elsewhere in African drylands, albeit with a lower degree of consistency, harmonisation, and implementation.

BOX – No Benin exception

In the 1980s, Benin adopted Law 97-013/1987 on "vaine pâture" establishing common ground for the governance of animal and grazing resources at the local level (APESS & RBM, 2013). Land policy initiatives in subsequent years aimed to issue certificates to secure ownership rights to local land holders, including in Fulani areas. After long time, a Pastoral Code was passed through Parliament in 2019 to protect pastoralists' access to resources through local authorities' land management plans. It also established a Support Fund for Pastoralism with representatives of professional herder organisations on the management committee and a National Agency for Transhumance Management. In 2020, a network of Beninese parliamentarians was established to look after the management of pastoral transhumance (Flintan et al., 2022).

However, the situation on the ground is obviously much more complex and nuanced. The pastoral code has not yet been implemented, and the network of MPs is not yet operational. On the other hand, reforms banning transhumance are advancing and sedentarization has returned to the foreground. This is currently being pursued through the creation of a High Commissariat for the Sedentarization of Pastoralists (Haut-Commissariat à la Sédentarisation des éleveurs), as well as through the large *Projet de Sédentarisation des Troupeaux de Ruminants (ProSeR)* (G. Djohy, pers. comm.).

In eastern Africa efforts to reconfigure power devolution to local institutional levels showed lower degrees of consistency and effectiveness. These include Mozambique's 1997 Land Act, Uganda's 1998 Land Act, and Tanzania's Land Use Planning initiatives, although with controversial outcomes.

BOX – Contradicting trends in Tanzania

Tanzania has strongly facilitated policy and legislation that provides opportunities for securing land for pastoralists, and engaging them in comprehensive land use planning at the village levels. The Village Land Act No. 5 of 1999 and the Land Use Planning Act No. 6 of 2007 guide local planning, granting power to Village Councils and their institutions to prepare participatory village land use plans and to issue certificates of customary rights accordingly. This legislation has been used for the basis of joint village land use planning in pastoral areas (Flintan et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, despite repeated efforts to formalise their land tenure over time through these legal processes and administrative procedures, evidence from the field confirms that pastoralists continue being permanently dispossessed of their territories, with significant implications on their livelihoods. The past decade has been characterised by five formal and large-scale eviction operations in three regions, where violent and unresolved conflicts over pastoral lands are reported, often accompanied by human rights violations. These conflicts concern the allocation of land to foreign investors or Tanzanian elites who use their influence to acquire rangelands for speculation or farming. Pastoralists have also been dispossessed of village land through the creation of new protected areas (National Parks, Game Reserves, or private conservancies). Pastoralists' control over and access to their customary land has further been diminished where wildlife management areas have been established, again decreasing the land available for livestock production (IWGIA, 2016).

The more recent institutional developments towards a federal set-up in Ethiopia and the devolution process in Kenya have contributed to generating new interactions between State structures, local communities, economic agents, and political elites. The Kenyan policy framework can be taken as an example of attempts to incorporate more pastoral friendly attitudes into institutional processes.

BOX – The Kenyan approach to Arid Lands

The National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (2012) specifically aims to address the specificities of the country arid and semi-arid region. In order to ensure that people in Northern Kenya and pastoral areas enjoy a level of access to public services comparable to those in other parts of the country, the Government will:

- Recognise, through legislation, pastoralism as a legitimate form of productive land use and development on the same basis as farming, and incorporate the value of dryland goods and services within national economic planning.
- Reconcile the electoral system with the realities of arid and pastoral areas.
- Ensure that devolved structures accommodate mobility and resource-sharing across administrative boundaries and draw on the knowledge and experience of customary institutions.
- Explore innovative ways of enhancing security and access to justice in arid and pastoral areas.
- Integrate the specific needs and circumstances of pastoralist youth, both women and men, within national youth policies and strategies, and develop youth friendly social services (GoK, 2012:24).

While subsequent governments have scaled down the pace of this agenda, the guiding principles remain in place, and, to some extent, have informed the decentralisation process that is reconfiguring power relations in the country over the past decade.

The other policy dimension that has opened up new political and economic space for SSA pastoralists is the recognition that an enabling institutional environment that promotes resilient livelihoods and sustainable resource management in the drylands requires a regional perspective, particularly on issues involving land governance, animal health services, trade agreements, border management and conflict resolution. Regional coordination and integration are critical in supporting pastoral livelihoods for either grazing or trading purposes. On the one hand, a transnational framework is needed to harmonise and enhance consistency amongst various aspects of national policies impinging on livestock systems; on the other, this is critical to facilitate trade, connections, exchanges and relations amongst the different countries, which is important for pastoral economies and particularly for those communities inhabiting in border areas.

Although the situation differs from a country to another – and many announcements, regulations, and formal engagements have seen limited follow-up – regional integration has evolved to a larger extent in Western Africa. This is probably due to the quite diverse institutional architectures, socio-cultural fabrics and political paradigms in the two regions, as well as the strategic role of transnational transhumance that historically interfaces the economies of different parts of the region. Cross-border mobility, migration, and commerce are necessary for the very survival of both sedentary and nomadic populations in the Sahel, whose drylands and southern coastal countries are historically interdependent through regional networks of trade and communication. At the interregional level, other forms of marketing, migratory flows, and traffic shape the regional connections between northern and western Africa, and between the Arabian peninsula and countries of the Horn.

BOX – Transhumance routes and regional networks

Sahelian transhumance taking place at local, national, and regional levels is an essential strategy to ensure an effective utilisation of complementary territories that show distinct agro-ecological and socio-economic features. Pastoral transhumance crosses through climatic zones, spreading livestock into the rich but short-lived pastures of the Sahel during the rainy season, while these move further south with the onset of the dry season. After spending the height of the dry season in the more humid south, herds move back north before the beginning of the agricultural activities of the rainy season (IOM, 2019; Moritz, 2010).

This form of mobility enables livestock's adequate nutritional intake by making full use of the variable offer of pastures as well as facilitating economic interactions and exchanges with farming and urban communities in the region and beyond. It is now widely acknowledged that transhumance also has positive environmental effects as it avoids overgrazing, provides manure, and stabilizes the vegetation (IOM, 2019). Access to these spaces is traditionally negotiated through social networks that pastoralists carefully maintain with local communities as well as through economic exchanges between groups (Bonnet et al., 2010; FAO_CIRAD, 2012). Thus apart from supporting livestock productivity, mobility and transhumance also support the reproduction of the pastoral system in its social and ecological dimensions.

Livestock moves from Sahelian countries to the coastal countries as well for trading purposes, along three main routes. In the west, the important flows are to Senegal, which imports more than 300,000 head per year from Mali and Mauritania. In the centre, Ivory Coast imports hundreds of thousands of animals per year from Mali and Burkina Faso. The heavyweight of the subregion remains Nigeria, which dominates transactions in the eastern corridor, accounting for half of all beef consumption in the ECOWAS region. An estimated 25% of this consumption (about 500,000 head per year) is imported, primarily from Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso (Babalola and Onapajo, 2018; IOM, 2019).

Over time routes have diversified as transhumance intensity has grown, responding to evolving pressures and dynamics, that include:

- demography, both livestock and human. From 1980 to 2005, cattle in the Sahel region increased by about 25% and small ruminants by about 65%; human population density is estimated at around 3% yearly, equivalent to a doubling every 30 years, with drylands typically showing higher fertility rates than the rest of the country (Blein et al., 2008; CILSS, 2016);
- expanding opportunities for livestock trade and milk markets to serve growing urban consumption demand in coastal countries (ECOWAS, 2016);
- environmental changes including shifting climatic patterns (ie., intensification of drought events and the southward shift in rainfall isohyets), and broader land use reconfiguration, including due to enhanced control of trypanosomiasis (OECD, 2014; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020).

Economic transitions and environmental changes also reconfigure relationships between herding and farming communities and territories. Just as herders move further south seeking new grazing opportunities in sub-humid areas, new markets, and livelihood diversification into trading and agriculture, crop farmers have responded to population dynamics and technical options by moving northward to marginal climatic zones once used for grazing. In the Sahel, cropland surfaces have doubled over the past four decades at the expense of natural shortgrass savannas. Farming

schemes have often encroached on strategic pasture zones such as lowlands, riverbanks, forests, and around water points for irrigation purposes – thus shifting land use and tenure patterns onto grazing resources that are critical to pastoralists, especially in dry seasons and drought periods (FAO-CIRAD, 2012; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020; Scoones, 2021).

Policy and interventions over decades have encouraged farmers to expand their livelihoods by acquiring their own herds and herders to settle and turn to crop farming. The former division between livestock and crop areas has blurred; an increase in the combination of farming and herding activities is reported, whereby communities who had no traditional ties have come to interact and converge on certain resources (Thebaud, 2017; IOM, 2019; Nori, 2019; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020). This has reduced complementarity between the two groups, resulting in new dynamics of competition for land and grazing. Pastoralists claim that while crop farming encroachment northward has received support from national as well as international organisations, the expansion of grazing options southward has often had a negative reception at most institutional levels, thus generating a sense of inequity and frustration (Benjaminsen and Ba, 2018; RBM, 2021). Moreover, the growing commoditisation of local resources has further exposed dryland communities to the vagaries of market dynamics. The crop-residues and water facilities that herders traditionally acquired in exchange for manure and milk are now paid for with cash rather than barter as customary collaborative mechanisms have been replaced by those centred on market and money (Kratli and Toulmin, 2020).

The interactions amongst rural communities in drylands are also increasingly affected by the expanding large-scale farming and development corridors, where consistent investments in physical and commercial infrastructure aim to ‘unlock the potential’ of inner rangelands and to enhance their contribution to the national economy and regional integration. Throughout the region, crop-focused schemes, transport infrastructure, energy investments, and nature conservation are parts of major land-grabbing initiatives backed by national states, private investors, international donors, and foreign countries. This sudden and intense interest for SSA drylands emerges from very diverse agendas, spanning from the Chinese Rust and Belt Initiative to climate financing initiatives and land-grab processes resulting from the externalisation of food and biofuel production (Catley and Aklilu, 2010; Schouten and Cold-Ravnkilde, 2020; RBM, 2021).

All the above result in intense encroachment of pastoral territories, entailing the displacement of grazing communities, privatisation of water resources, growth of small towns, development on mining industry, and major rearticulation of territories and reconfiguration of power and influence in drylands – further fuelling competition amongst different land users. The Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET), together with Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor in Tanzania and the Beira corridor in central Mozambique, are often depicted and narrated as parts of wider dynamics enhancing trade engagement and economic growth; however, their far-reaching consequences on pastoralists and their livelihoods are yet to be assessed (Nori et al., 2008; Markus, 2013; OECD, 2014; Korf et al., 2015; Lind, 2019; Scoones, 2021; Flintan et al., 2022). Similar processes, through different patterns, are reported in the Sahel (Moritz, 2010; AFD, 2013; RBM, 2021).

BOX – LAPSSET cutting through northern Kenya rangelands

The LAPSSET corridor connecting inner drylands with the Indian Ocean is planned to come through Isiolo, with the town earmarked for major investments. While the LAPSSET corridor is evolving incrementally, with important infrastructure developments such as the highway to Moyale and the reopening of Isiolo airport, speculative interests are growing at a faster rate than the region (Lind, 2019). As the northern ‘frontier’ is opened by infrastructure and development as well as conservancy efforts, many see opportunities for speculation and investment, while pastoralists increasingly feel dispossessed of their own lands. Policy attention to the northern dryland areas has resulted in improvement of roads and communications connections, including with the interior areas.

Mobile telephony network coverage has extended and, combined with the availability of cheap motorbikes, dramatically improved marketing prospects. The county is criss-crossed by motorbikes carrying camel milk, live animals, and other products to urban areas and consumer goods back again, with mobile phones instrumental in checking supply, demand, and prices (Nori, 2019a).

No doubt the implications for local communities' livelihoods will be far-reaching, yet still largely unknown. It is likely that these developments will escalate the number of inequalities and potentially conflict over the coming years; opportunities arise, and communities organise accordingly amidst land grabbing, external pressures, and growing uncertainties in general (IGAD, 2019; Lind, 2019).

The conversion of large rangeland chunks into other land uses, not only undermines the common property regimes governing the entire territory, but practically excludes herders from critical hotspots for dry season grazing and during drought events, often relegating poor strata and minority groups into degraded or marginal lands. As also acknowledged by the AU (2011), as local resources are increasingly exploited by external agencies, the impact of such investments on local revenues, employment rates, and service provision remains unnoticed. This may represent a primary driver of degradation of local livelihoods and a source of local frustrations, tensions and conflict escalations.

A transnational governance

A new policy arena has thus been evolving, driven by developments in the institutional setting and the repositioning of drylands within the global arena. At the continental level, a main turning point has been the adoption of the African Union *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa* (AU, 2011). This relevant policy document follows the AU's *Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (2010)*, and while recognising that pastoralists' contributions are crucial to regional food, social, trade, and ecological system, it reiterates that pastoral areas in Africa are currently facing multi-dimensional and complex development challenges. The AU policy framework is articulated through two main complementary and intertwined axes: on the one hand it aims to protecting and securing the lives, livelihoods, and rights of African pastoralists in order to strengthen their contribution to national, regional, and continental economies. Accordingly, it calls for processes of regional integration, as '*pastoralist ecosystems often transcend national borders and movement within these systems is economically and ecologically rational*' (ibid.:10). On the other hand, it emphasises the need to fully engage pastoralists in the national and regional governance mechanisms, and in defining development processes and approaches to avoid the shortcoming of past policies and interventions.

Through its Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR), the AU already plays a significant role in supporting pastoral economies by harnessing animal health conditions through the campaigns to control *Trypanosomiasis* and Rinderpest. Its 2015 Livestock Development Strategy specifically prizes pastoralists' mobility and rangeland management for their effectiveness in enhancing resilience of disaster-prone territories and vulnerable communities. AU-IBAR actions quite clearly exhibit the need for regional-level coordination of services and policies across national borders. These have materialised in efforts to harmonise zoo-sanitary standards amongst west African countries to support transnational trade, as well as through local vet staff who can issue certificates required at border controls for live exports. The New Partnership of Africa's Development (NEPAD), together with the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP, in 2012), provide strategic platforms for coordinating rural development policies and investments at continental level. The livestock sector is granted significant concerns in each country, with quite different takes on pastoralism. Africa is also home to the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the CGIAR centre mandated to improve lives through livestock in developing countries.

Sub-regional policies and structures have also evolved, including amongst civil society actors, specifically on matters relating to dryland management and cross-border movement, with different pace and intensity. West African countries coordinate at the regional level through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), paralleled by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). Several policies and legislative texts regulate cross-border relationships and related movements of livestock, people, and goods in a transnational, regional perspective. In 1979, the Protocol on Free Movement placed free movement at the centre of the ECOWAS plan. This protocol was supplemented by several other agreements: the Citizenship Code (1982), the Travel Certificate (1985), Resident Map (1990), and Community Passport (2000).

BOX – Formal organisations of pastoralists civil society in the Sahel

The institutional environment surrounding livestock and pastoral matters in the Sahel is crowded, with representatives from different levels and perspectives. Several professional organisations are active at the regional level in support of pastoralists' needs and rights:

Billitaal Maroobe (RBM) is a network of organizations of breeders and pastoralists created in 2003 to integrate breeders in the process of developing national and sub-regional policies related to livestock production and rangeland management. Its mandate includes strengthening the capacities of pastoral organisations and ensuring access to markets and basic services.

The Network of Farmers' Organisations and Producers of West Africa (ROPFA) aims to support organisational capacities of family farms and agricultural producers, also with a view to enhancing their representation and participation in policy fora.

The Association for the Promotion of the Livestock in the Sahel and the Savanna (APESS) based in Burkina aims at enhancing organisational and technical innovations to better face ongoing changes and uncertainties affecting livestock producers.

Some confederations of cattle-related value chain operators in West Africa seek to enhance the organisation of commercial networks at the national and regional levels through capacity-building and engagement in policy negotiations. Some of these organisations have been strongly involved in revising the West Africa regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP) and developing the second generation of ECOWAS regional and national investment plans, as well as several regional projects and programmes (Flintan et al., 2022).

In 1998, ECOWAS member states issued livestock passports aimed at regulating cross-border moves through an International Transhumance Certificate (ITC) issued to transhumant pastoralists, indicating that *'the crossing of land borders for the transhumance of cattle, sheep, goats, camels and donkeys according to conditions defined by this Decision is authorized between all the countries of the Community'* (Art. 3). Despite its positive intentions, the Passport is criticised for being too rigid – it is difficult to set transhumance dates and routes, as these depend on the climate – and even more for its incompliance, as bribery demands and other obstacles remain problems for herders crossing borders. Its further regulations adopted in 2003 to implement ICT principles subverted the original assumptions, in that pastoral transhumance is considered an archaic production method that needs to be replaced by more modern, and therefore intensive, forms of livestock-rearing (VSF, 2018).

Table 3 – The engagements of the ITC passport

Conditions granted to herders	Conditions requested from herders
<p>The ITC facilitates herders in the movement and reception of their animals, including through information systems that alert local residents. The rights of non-resident mobile herders are protected by the host countries' legislation, and their livestock is guaranteed basic services, including for animal health.</p> <p>Conflict resolution mechanisms are established through a conciliation commission (<i>commission de conciliation</i>) composed of herders, farmers, local government representatives, and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>Herders must provide local administration services with information on their herd, animal health status, the itinerary they intend to follow, and the border posts they will use. In addition, there must be a minimum of two herders at any one time, and at least one herder per 50 head of livestock.</p> <p>Incoming herders must abide by the laws of the host country in relation to the use of forests, wildlife, water points, and pastures.</p>

Source: COMESA, 2010

Other important agreements include the Regulatory Informal Trade Programme and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-African Highway Network. Furthermore, ECOWAS instituted a Cross-Border Initiatives Programme in 2006 to co-ordinate and formalise cross-border initiatives and expand co-operative frameworks for intra-community borders. The Land Tenure Action Plan adopted in 2009 provided for a West African Regional Land Tenure Observatory (Flintan et al., 2022), while the Territorial Authorities Council (TAC) institutionalised in 2011 the political representation of territorial authorities within the Union. The Regional Trade Promotion Programme funded by the UEMOA invests in promoting regional exchanges and facilitating intra-regional trade.

At the sectoral level, the West African Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and related institutions and initiatives define the strategic framework for food security, agriculture, and rural development policies within a regional perspective, which is left to national and sub-national levels for implementation. In recent times, most development initiatives in the region have included pastoralism as a strategic axis, as most programmes addressing livestock, rangelands, and pastoralism have endorsed a regional, transnational approach. The Declarations of N'Djamena and Nouakchott in 2013 generated important momentum on pastoralism in the Sahel, whereas in the Horn it is mostly through IGAD and its agencies that such a perspective is evolving, although the different approaches and interests of member states often override their commitment to regional engagements.

BOX – 2013 Capital Declarations

2013 was a significant year in the Sahel; to address growing tensions in the region, some governments proposed establishing a new social contract between state institutions and pastoral communities.

Declaration de N'Djamena, 2013:

[. . .] The participants consider that the future of Sahelo-Saharan areas cannot be conceived without pastoralism and its irreplaceable roles for of economic, social, environmental and territorial development. (. . .) In the Sahelo-Saharan region, where security is seriously threatened, the relationship between herd mobility and security operates in both directions. As pastoralism and trade are main safe and peaceful activities in these areas, they represent an essential line of defense against insecurity through the occupation of space. [We] invite the States of the region and development partners to place pastoralism at the heart of the strategies of stabilization and development in the short, medium and long term of the Sahelo-Saharan areas (. . .)

Declaration de Nouakchott, 2013:

[. . .] Unanimously, we affirm that pastoralism must be placed at the heart of the strategies and policies of stabilization, of sustainable development and of agricultural development at the national and regional levels, by integrating issues of sustainable management, equitable resource sharing, political inclusion, security, markets connections, health, education and gender. [. . .] Together we declare our commitment to [. . .] accelerate the political inclusion of pastoral communities through:

- a) systematic consideration of pastoralism in development policies, plans and programs;
- b) recognition of the legitimacy of traditional pastoral institutions;
- c) the inclusion of pastoralists in the processes of participation, consultation and decision-making put in place by the decentralized institutions.

The Horn of Africa is also home to large pastoral communities where livestock-rearing provides a main livelihood asset. Cross-border activities, exchanges, and networks are typical features and important aspects of most pastoral populations, often connected through trans-boundary socio-economic and cultural ties. The chance of crossing borders is also strategic in times of conflict and drought, when critical livelihood resources can be sought on the other side of the border, and thus play a key role in enhancing pastoralists' resilience (IGAD, 2019). The policy frame on these transnational aspects recognises the importance of such cross-border relationships, even in a wider regional economic perspective, but in practice provides quite poor support, if not constraints, in institutional and infrastructural terms (ICPALD, 2016b).

The degree of regional integration and coordination amongst countries in the Horn is less advanced, especially on matters related to rangeland management, pastoral development, and cross-border movements, which are yet to be addressed in a more comprehensive and coherent framework, as these are rather addressed through bilateral agreements (OECD, 2014; ICPALD, 2016a). However, the past decade witnessed the deepening and expansion of economic and developmental cooperation especially in the domains of infrastructure development and large-scale investment schemes.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGAD) is the regional institution mandated to assist and complement country efforts through enhanced cooperation to achieve food security and environmental protection, promote and maintain peace and security, humanitarian affairs, and economic cooperation and integration; IGAD specifically advocates for the coordination of the national governments to pursue more inclusive livelihoods for livestock-keepers. To that aim, it established the Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD, 2016a,b) with the mandate to sustainably generate wealth and employment through livestock and complementary livelihood resources development in the region's arid and semi-arid (ASALs) areas.

Other thematic agencies, centres, and programmes compatible with pastoral agendas in a regional perspective include the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) set up in 2002, which has played a relevant role in the conflicts in South Sudan, Karamoja, Somalia, the Drought Disaster Resilience Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) in 2012, the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center (ICPAC), and the Sheikh Technical Veterinary School in Somaliland.

BOX – Formal pastoralist civil society organisations in the Horn countries

The institutional environment surrounding livestock and pastoral matters in the Horn is crowded with organisations mostly active at the national level:

Uganda: Greater North Parliamentary Forum, Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organizations, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries and parliamentary committees.

Tanzania: Parliamentary Committees, Parliamentary Working Groups, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, Ujamaa Community Resource Team, Pastoralists Indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations (PINGO's) Forum, and Tanzania Natural Resources Forum.

Ethiopia: Pastoralist Standing Committee of Parliament, Federal Affairs and Pastoralist Ministry, Ministry of Livestock and Fishery Development, and Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia.

South Sudan: Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources at the national and state levels, Pastoralist Organisations, Institutions, Civil Society Organizations Networks, Sudan Council of Churches, and the Council of Ministers at the state and national levels.

Kenya: Ministry of Agriculture-Department of Livestock, Ministry of Devolution, County Ministries of Pastoralism and Livestock production, Pastoralist Parliamentary Group, Senate Committee, Council of Governors, Parliamentary Committees, Constitutional Implementation Committee, Pastoralist Civil Society Organizations Networks, Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative, Pastoralist Leaders Forum, South Rift Association of Land Owners and National Drought Management Authority.

Somalia: Ministries of Pastoralism and Environment (Somaliland, Puntland, Somalia), Pastoralist Parliamentary Committees, Somaliland Pastoral Forum, and the IGAD Sheikh Veterinary School.

At the regional level, the North-Eastern Africa Livestock Council is quite active in the policy arena representing livestock traders' interests. Pastoral producers' organisations have limited regional outreach and include the Eastern and South African Pastoralists Network (EASPN) and the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA).

Based on the ECOWAS experience and inspired by the AU policy framework, in 2020 IGAD – assisted by ICPALD – unanimously endorsed a Protocol on Transhumance to facilitate cross-border mobility of livestock and herders in East Africa. The Protocol calls for mapping and designation of livestock routes and identification of areas where cross border herders may move with their herds. While not directly targeting land governance, the Protocol is significant insofar as it signals a degree of appreciation for the importance of mobility for pastoralist livestock production, and challenges the conventional institutional assumptions that pastoralists must only move within local territories. The extent to which the Protocol will have a tangible impact depend on the speed and depth with which it will now be implemented. The whole process has, however, been criticised as very state-centric, with a heavily technocratic approach that barely accounted for local communities' participation and engagement (CELEP, 2020; Flintan et al., 2022).

At sub-regional levels, COMESA (the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) recognises the consistency and relevance of livestock cross-border moves for their productivity as well as for the regional economy; in line with the CAADP and NEPAD principles it has taken a clear stand on supporting pastoral livelihoods through their better integration into national and regional economies (COMESA, 2009). It is in fact acknowledged that *'revenues earned from cross-border trade primarily finance the import of cereals and other essential items (tea, sugar, oil, medicine, clothing) into grain-deficit dry pastoral areas. The value and importance of this back trading is such that when cross-*

border livestock sales are banned, governments discover that they have to bring in food aid. (...). Cross-border mobility is also critical for the maintenance of high pastoral livestock productivity. National borders divide ecological zones and cut through trading routes. The border between Kenya and Uganda, for example, demarcated along the Turkana escarpment, severs the wet season lowland plains to the east from the wetter dry season highland grazing areas to the west. This has seriously undermined pastoral productivity and ability to manage drought and thereby contributes to conflict' (COMESA 2010:1). Accordingly, COMESA facilitates trade in livestock and its products regionally and internationally, through harmonisation and streamlining of livestock trading standards among its member states, including through micro-finance institutions in support of livestock insurance for animals in transit.

A creeping sense of frustration

The confluence of new understandings about the synergic relationships between livestock mobility, non-equilibrium ecology of drylands, and customary institutional arrangements would implicitly suggest devolving greater rangeland management authority to local groups and certainly considering their involvement in land-use planning and decision-making. Despite over a decade of interest and attention generated by these innovative insights and perspectives, little progress has been achieved on the ground – and more emphatic policy prescriptions remain largely disregarded. Though paved with good intentions, a large part of pastoral-friendly proclamations and related institutional arrangements remain unattended. They often fail to convert into legislation, directives, and guidelines because of dwindling political commitment, cumbersome bureaucracies, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Implementation has consequently often lagged too. The limited policy commitment in translating innovative principles into grounded practices is also visible in the inadequate resource allocation and services provisions aimed at improving pastoralists' socio-economic conditions (Turner, 2011; APESS & RBM, 2013; De Haan, 2016; ICPALD, 2016a,b).

A persistent bias towards crop farming and sedentarised livestock keeping heavily influences development narratives and related policy and investments frameworks. A limited budget is typically assigned to the ministries or departments of livestock, and often this is in support of intensification schemes. Such bias is also apparent in official development assistance, with the portion of agriculture funding that goes to livestock being far less than livestock contribution to agricultural GDP (Smith et al., 2020; Flintan et al., 2022). Ambiguities persist as well in most institutional structures, state agencies and legislative texts, and blatant inconsistencies characterise several national and regional policy frameworks (Kratli, 2013; Campbell, 2021). The poor level of implementation or enforcement of these principles in effective investments, programmes and practices at all levels has fuelled a sense of frustration and grievance among pastoralist populations.

As Odhiambo and Sar Shadrack (2009:6) note, a rare commonality amongst East African States is the desire of governments to settle pastoralists and convert their lands to crop farms and ranches. Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tanzania are all promoting settlement, destocking, commercial ranching, and controlled grazing in pastoral areas. Whatever the evolving narrative, most government policies continue pursuing drylands modernisation through strategies grounded on the ideology of transforming pastoralists into sedentary, intensive, and commercial farmers/producers. In Eastern Africa typical cases are issued from Ugandan and Ethiopian governments. *'Lessons from Karamoja reveal that it is not enough to have political will favorable to the development of the livestock sector in general. There has to be a concrete understanding of the role of pastoralism and its contribution to the livelihoods of populations in pastoral areas. Where the political will looks at pastoralism as the problem and calls for its proscription as a way of life and production system, policy initiatives are unlikely to be supportive, which undermines opportunities for poverty-reduction interventions built around livestock production. Where the role of pastoralism is understood, there is need to translate this understanding into increased public and private sector investment in pastoral areas' development'* (Muhereza, 2017: 26).

BOX – Ethiopia: unfriendly inconsistency

Ethiopia provides a vivid example of the contradictions in the Horn between the growing relevance of pastoral systems for the national economy, and the inconsistencies of a policy framework that formally recognises pastoralists' capacities and needs, but that in practice shows a longstanding record of policies that undermine their livelihoods.

Between 2011 and 2012, Ethiopia exported more than \$190 million worth of live animals, mainly supplied by dryland pastoral systems - three times more than it exported in 2005. The total pastoral output (live animals and meat) accounts for about 20 percent of the country international exports. Increasing livestock exports is a stated objective of the government's Agricultural Growth Program, inspired in part by figures and practices of neighbouring Sudan and Somalia. While it is clear that the State perceives livestock as a valuable source of export earnings, this does not prevent it from taking policy actions that hinder pastoral systems (Behnke and Metaferia, 2011; Catley, 2017; Little, 2021).

The establishment of a federal system with the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution did supposedly '*pave the way to a better understanding of the socioeconomic and ecological particularities of pastoralist regions in the process of national planning and policy development*'. Key provisions recognize the distinctive rights of pastoral groups, within the wider framework whereby '*all Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples shall be granted equal opportunity to improve their economic situations, and least advantaged ones shall receive special assistance in economic and social development*' (FDRE, 1994 as quoted in Gebremeskel et al., 2019:15-16). Articles 40, 41, 43, and 44 specifically translate these principles and the related development policies, strategies, and programs in pastoral areas, explicitly stating that '*Ethiopian pastoralists have a right to free land for grazing and cultivation as well as a right not to be displaced from their own lands*' (40/5), and "*Ethiopian pastoralists have the right to receive fair prices for their products, that would lead to improvement in their conditions of life and to enable them to obtain an equitable share of the national wealth commensurate with their contribution*' (41/8). In addition to the 1994 Constitution, many high-level policy documents, national policy strategies, and flagship programmes reiterate Ethiopian government's concern for pastoral regions.

These include the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) (2002–05), the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (2006–10), and the Livestock Master Plan of 2015.

These favourable assumptions and committed engagements enshrined in the Constitution have strictly remained on paper. Whatever government in power, the main destiny the State envisions for Ethiopian pastoralists is that of settled citizens, preferably irrigated farmers or intensive livestock producers. Their sedentarisation is overemphasised as a strategic long-term policy direction for their development, while rangelands have been expropriated and converted to other uses and interests through large investment schemes – power dams, sugar and cotton plantations, biofuels, irrigation schemes – actively promoted by the Ethiopian government through State agencies, private investors and international organisations (see Fratkin, 2014 on the use of World Bank resources to implement sedentarisation schemes in the country). These have eventually degenerated into violent conflicts between herding communities and the formal institutional set-up in several regions of the country (Abebe and Bekure, 2013; Gebremeskel et al., 2019; Little, 2021)

In West Africa the Pastoral Codes have been criticised for the limited involvement of local communities in the drafting process and also the uncertainty generated by trying to formalise and regularise herders' moves and their spatial and temporal patterns. Moreover the actual degree of devolution of power and recognition of pastoralist's rights in many countries had reportedly been limited, as control over pastoral resources - including grazing land, water points, transhumance routes and animal health services - has not been passed to the entitled local authorities (Hesse and Thébaud, 2006; Flintan, 2011; Flintan et al., 2022). On the whole, devolution of power and decentralisation processes have rather contributed to weakening the social networks and customary institutions of pastoralists, generating a sense of disillusionment that has often outweighed the benefits actually received (Touré, 2004; OECD, 2014; De Bruijn et al., 2016; IOM, 2019).

The evolutions of the ECOWAS policy framework provide another taste of the tensions, contradictions, and conflicting interests when it comes to translating principles into appropriate practices. The 2011-2020 Strategic Action Plan for the Development and Transformation of the Livestock Sector as part of the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) states the main objective of the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan is to better satisfy the growing urban demand for livestock products through the intensification of livestock production by sedentary farmers. This advice follows from the recognition that progress towards a regional framework for convergent land tenure policies was facing strong reluctance. Transhumant pastoralism is viewed as intrinsically problematic and the main reason for 'the clashes between farmers and herders, the degradation of pastoral reserves and resources in the areas where they settle, and the spread of diseases' (VSF, 2018:20). At the same time the ECOWAS regional strategic policy framework for agriculture called on the Sahelian and coastal states to develop a shared vision for the development of integrated pastoral and agro-pastoral systems, building on their comparative agro-ecological advantages (ECOWAS, 2016).

Complementary to these, a set of institutional agencies have been established over time at different levels with the mandate to specifically address crises in drylands, particularly droughts. The first was the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), followed by other Food Security, Drought Management, Disaster Risk Management, Famine Early Warning agencies, at either the regional or national level, including IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI). Other, more innovative efforts to reduce pastoralists' exposure to livelihood shocks and related food security problems in the Sahel and Horn regions have included the establishment of strategic food and feed reserves, extending animal health service coverage, and testing livestock insurance schemes. These interventions often evolve from paradigmatic lens that embraces stability, equilibrium, and certainty rather than providing opportunities to harness variability management, thus failing to recognise rangelands' non-equilibrium dynamics, and so reiterating some misplaced assumption of the functioning of pastoral systems.

The longstanding inconsistencies of the policy framework have not been free from implications, as recent decades have witnessed a dramatic erosion of pastoral livelihoods, with growing demographics, changing climate, and shrinking rangelands (UNCCD, 2014). This is measured by declines in the availability of common pastures and livestock mobility and the related, significant social and ecological impacts (Hesse and Thébaud, 2006; Nori et al., 2008; Eclis, 2013). It also results in States' dwindling capacities to reverse ongoing trends and the consequent deepening focus on humanitarian approaches in pastoral areas, where a relief perspective has often replaced development paradigms. In turn the current emphasis on humanitarian assistance through persistent relief schemes and large safety net programmes, leads to a cycle of dependency, dislocating pastoralists from their lands and economic activities, thus contributing significantly to altering their resilience (Odhiambo and Sar Shadrack, 2009; RBM, 2021).

BOX – Pastoralists off the Nets

To provide structural relief to communities' socio-economics, many SSA countries are testing Safety Nets for poorer and the most vulnerable population strata. While dryland rural populations have been specifically targeted by such interventions, the implementation and implications in pastoral areas proved unsurprisingly challenging. Experience from the longstanding Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia showed its quite limited impact on asset-building and viable wealth accumulation in pastoral areas, eventually causing local discontent and tensions (Catley, 2017). While a set of logistical aspects has been used to justify poor delivery mechanisms, pastoral communities' limited integration in national institutional and economic structures has no doubt been a primary aspect of such failure (WB, 2016). From a wider political perspective, structural Safety Nets programs create further problems of sustainability and accountability, as most funding comes from international organisations (WFP, ECHO) and this option raises several policy and practical questions.

Social protection is more than delivering social assistance programmes such as food or cash handouts. Though these should be *grounded in a thorough understanding of pastoral livelihoods*, the majority of existing formal social protection mechanisms in pastoral areas of eastern Africa were originally designed for a sedentary communities and do not recognise some of the unique elements of pastoral livelihoods, especially mobility. Most existing schemes are delivered to settled populations and thus impact importantly on pastoralists' mobility and therefore on their livelihoods (Abdirahman and Hobson, 2009, Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2011). Once again the aid infrastructure following from humanitarian crises does not account for the specificities of pastoral realities, prioritising stability and control when uncertainty dominates and variability counts. The only certainty acquired is that millions of dollars actually contributed to worsening rather than supporting livelihoods in pastoral areas.

Conditions of food insecurity for many pastoral communities and their growing socio-economic vulnerability to recurrent climatic events materialised through the dramatic effects of the lengthy drought affecting SSA in 2010, when many dryland communities have slipped into 'complex livelihood crisis', where food and social security aspects intertwine with dramatic livelihood collapse. Reports indicate that beyond drylands, such crises also affected entire regional populations depending on pastoralism for meat and milk (UNCCD, 2014). These events have been somehow eye-opening for international agencies and inspired a more integrated approach. The European Union has made significant efforts in the respect through the SHARE (in the Horn) and AGIR (in the Sahel) programmes in recognising the need to 1) improve links between humanitarian and development assistance; 2) combine a regional approach with national-level interventions; and 3) enhance coordination and alliances between the different intervening actors.

Several initiatives have subsequently attempted to encourage a more regional focus in supporting livelihoods of dryland communities. These include the Sahel Region Pastoral Support Programme (PRAPS - Programme Régional d'Appui au Pastoralisme au Sahel), the Regional Project for Dialogue and Investment in Pastoralism and Transhumance (PREDIP - Projet Régional de Dialogue et d'Investissement pour le Pastoralisme et la transhumance au Sahel et dans les Pays Côtiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest), and the Integrated and Secure Livestock Farming and Pastoralism in West Africa Project (PEPISAO - Projet Élevages et Pastoralisme Intégrés et Sécurisés en Afrique de l'Ouest).

An evolving playground

The recent reconfiguration of pastoral societies in Sub-Saharan drylands has occurred through interconnected processes that have importantly transformed rangelands' socio-economic and political landscapes. The intense integration of pastoral economies into market mechanisms has corresponded to dramatic impoverishment and inequalities among pastoral populations; this has in turn generated patterns of frustration and grievance, especially amongst the youth, leading to the political radicalisation of social exclusion and significant levels of confrontation with state institutions (Catley et al., 2013; Lind et al., 2016). While these processes are not new to the region, their scale and pace are unprecedented, and their implications for regional dynamics are of growing concern.

On the one hand, access to rangelands is being reduced by the encroachment of external appetites, interests and investment. Reduced access to pastoral resources is a structural driver of crises for herding communities, as this obviously strikes at the heart of their livelihood systems. Any process or agents challenging secure access to rangelands to feed their animals and ultimately their families will likely cause severe tension and direct conflict with pastoral interests and people. The progressive appropriation of pastoral resources by other players – be it commercial livestock keeping, ranching agri-business, farming schemes, mineral industry, power stations, nature conservation, or any use or agenda encroaching on ranges as if these were lands available for use and free from holders – provides a direct threat to local livelihoods and generate forms of exclusion and grievance.

From Somalia to Sudan to Nigeria, the growing economic opportunities associated to the exploitation of rangeland resources have attracted new interests, actors, and agendas into drylands. The commercialisation of livestock products has become a highly lucrative business for national elites, well connected groups, and transnational companies that invest in livestock with a view to seizing the expanding market opportunities provided by growing urban and export demands for animal products (Little and Mahmoud, 2005; IOM, 2019; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020). Dryland ranges provide a perfect setting to graft private, speculative interests from common, public lands. Large swathes of land are acquired and fenced as enclosures for the purpose of establishing livestock ranches as in Nigeria, or large herds are scattered amongst common grazing lands as in Southern Sudan and Somalia. These enterprises often display socio-political connections and operate by recruiting labour as hired herders from pastoral communities (RBM, 2021).

BOX – The Nigerian way to modern ranching

For the government's Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016–2020), *'the cattle value chain has become a security problem, as its value chain relies on a network of nomadic herdsmen with cattle entering a brief fattening system before slaughter and processing. That supply chain however is both inefficient and a high security risk as roaming cattle increasingly is a source of friction between landowners and herdsmen. In order to protect all parties, a key shift is necessary that is to retain cattle in ranches. Thus, what is required is the creation of a more formal ranching system that will use better processes and inputs to extract higher value from in the form of dairy, meat, and leather'* (p. 19).

Consistent with this view, the Nigerian government has issued an ambitious ten-year National Livestock Transformation Plan, which hinges on two diverse and complementary strategies to modernise and intensify production, rather than supporting pastoral systems. Reducing livestock movements also aims

On the one hand, in 2016 a National Grazing Reserve Bill legalized grazing in these areas, but does not provide land ownership to pastoralists, leaving the reserves vulnerable to sale by traditional authorities to outsiders for private gain and to encroachment by farmers, urban

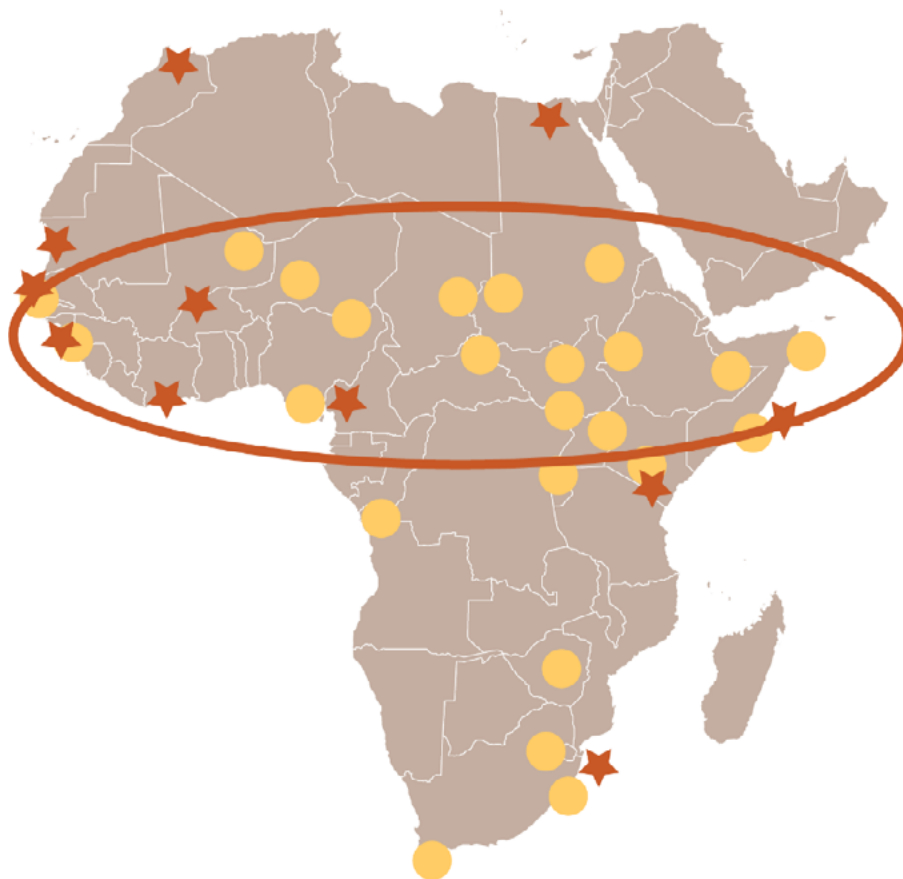
developers, mining, and so on. On the other hand, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in 2017 presented a National Ranching Development Plan in support of the establishment of cattle ranches, with public funding invested in fodder production, breeding programmes, veterinary service, and other livestock management practices. Two states have prescribed ranching as the only legal form of animal production and four states have introduced 'anti-open-grazing laws' making it illegal for herders to move their animals for grazing on their territories, in order to limit interactions with farmers and reduce local tensions. It goes without saying that pastoral groups protested these bills, whose effective implementation has not significantly progressed.

In large tracts of SSA drylands, herding communities have seen their socio-economic conditions deteriorate; they feel impoverished and insecure, and find it increasingly difficult to make a decent living from local livestock production. Indeed, their vulnerability has increased, their living conditions degraded and their community networks weakened. In such a context, some groups and individuals are turning to other organisations, actors and practices that could better support their livelihoods, help rebalance local inequalities and provide more appropriate forms of justice systems, social services and economic opportunities.

Networks of smugglers and traffickers, including in human beings, weapons and drugs, capitalise on pastoralists' political and economic grievances by co-opting their skills, networks and labour to seize control of extensive territories and the added-value of operating across borders (Little, 2003; FAO, 2006; UNECA, 2017; Ancy et al., 2017). Young poor herders might then become easy prey for agents of radicalisation and political extremism, as illegal businesses often intertwine with those of transnational organisations pursuing wider political agendas in opportunistic alliances of mutual interests and collaboration (UNCCD, 2014; OECD, 2014). The large commercial and geographic overlaps between illicit activities, rebel movements, and pastoral systems across Sub-Saharan Africa result in a blurry distinction between politically-motivated rebellions and mafia-style criminal networks, in what has been labelled 'new fringe pastoralism (N'Djamena Decl., 2013; UNECA, 2017; Kratli and Toulmin, 2020).

Political leaders, mafia-like organisations, and insurgent groups have successfully manipulated ethnic identities, political asymmetries, and local grievances to mobilise support for their activities. These provide weapons, salaries and opportunities to seize power at the local level, and with these the promise of redressing the many injustices faced by pastoralists and thereby transforming the local political economy. Cases include Islamic State and al-Qaeda in the Sahelo-Saharan fringes, Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, Al-Shabaab in the Somali ecosystem, and other organisations operating across SSA drylands and beyond, where local communities are drawn into a 'war economy' dominated by politicians, smugglers commanders, and fighters whose interests lie in generating new forms of power, protection and profit (Nori and Baldaro, 2018; Kratli and Toulmin, 2020).

Ethnic and identity discourses and practices have melded with local social and land use claims and conflicts over the past decade, triggering inter-communal violence, often framed narrowly in religious terms by scholars, politicians, and the mass media (Higazi, 2016; Benjaminsen and Ba, 2018; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020; Kratli and Toulmin, 2020). While the use of ideology and religious discourse plays an important role for insurgent groups, the motivation to participate is generally more deeply rooted in other factors. Accordingly, the 'securitarian' narrative evolves from the consideration that, particularly in SSA, most recent armed conflicts occur in drylands, where terrorist attacks, food riots, and other tensions related to the vulnerability of those areas to desertification triggered by demographic growth and reduced rainfall (UNCCD, 2014). The socio-political dynamics underlying such trends are hardly addressed in policy analyses, as these phenomena mostly seem to stem from mere socio-cultural differences or bio-physical dynamics, leading to identitarian clashes or competition over shrinking resources.

Picture 2 – When desertification meets insecurity

Note: yellow marks indicate conflict zones, red stars indicate food riots

Source: own elaboration from UNCCD, 2014

But as we know, State authority declines as aridity increases for reasons that are firstly political. These processes largely draw from the intense social discrimination, political exclusion, and economic marginalisation characterising most pastoral communities, whose identitarian instances merge with acute economic necessities and extreme political revindications. One process drives and triggers the other in spiralling cycles of social and political insecurity, whereby pastoralists might be perpetrators but are definitely the primary victims, becoming active parts of the emerging narrative of pastoralism as a security issue. The sense of frustration with the formal institutional setting is common throughout SSA drylands despite pastoral groups' heterogeneity in terms of internal social cohesion, political networks, and relationships with local and formal administrations.

BOX – On the margins of decision-making, on the frontline of the crises

The security crisis exerts a heavy price on pastoralists. It has resulted in a drop in the number of people going to markets, the closure of some markets, and an overall decline in the price of livestock. As livestock are a major source of wealth in rural areas, there is a significant financial incentive for cattle rustling and theft can have a devastating impact on individuals and communities whose generational wealth exists in the form of livestock. Local communities are furthermore exposed to a huge increase in detentions, kidnapping, and executions by all armed actors (Brottem and McDonnell, 2020; RBM, 2021).

The incorporation of pastoral regions, communities, and economies in the wider (capitalist) economy shifts the rules of the game, the role of actors, and the playing field. On the one hand this has opened the way for external, non-pastoral interests and agendas, from climate change financing,

to transnational corporations to global jihad, to contribute significantly to diverting the configuration of new socio-political landscapes. On the other hand, the ongoing dynamics are contributing to the recognition that pastoral communities are strategic allies in the pursuit of sustainable governance and political stability in the region (N'Djamena Decl., 2013; APSS and RBM, 2013; Ancey et al., 2017). The key policy question is how to disentangle and redress these dynamics, translating the wider recognition of the rights and interests of pastoralists into their integration in local, national, and regional institutional and economic structures, aimed at ending their sense of structural exclusion and socio-political marginalisation (FAFO, 2016).

Instead, ongoing initiatives are framing pastoralism as a security issue and applying the unhelpful equation of pastoralists as terrorists; security forces are deployed to control dryland territories and reassert State authority, through the hardening of national frontiers, restricting cross-border mobility and exchanges, and promoting sedentarisation (World Bank, 2014; UNECA, 2017). These measures provide additional threats to local livelihoods, contributing to further reinforcing the detachment from the formal institutional setting, especially amongst the younger generations (APSS and RBM, 2013; Ancey et al., 2017; Schouten and Cold-Ravnkilde, 2020).

More enlightened approaches recognise that the cost of conventional policing in remote and vast pastoral territories cannot be sustained without the involvement of pastoral communities. A flourishing pastoral economy is thus essential to ensure political stability throughout the region. Particularly in cross-border areas, the challenges of development and food as well as social security are closely intertwined, and these require consistent and coordinated efforts at all levels (ECA, AU, ADB, 2010; de Haan et al., 2014; Ancey et al., 2017; Brottem and McDonnell, 2020).

A policy framework in the loop

The African Union (2010:11) acknowledged that *'development challenges of pastoral areas in Africa are multi-dimensional and complex but nevertheless, need urgent attention. Poverty, environmental degradation, marked rainfall variability, human and animal diseases, conflicts and civil strife must be dealt with simultaneously. Inappropriate development policies, ineffective institutional settings, unfair market relationships and increased pressure on pastoral ecosystems add to these challenges, and place many pastoralists in a situation of worsening vulnerability'*. More than a decade has elapsed since these elements of complexity and urgency were exhibited, accompanied by the call for the political inclusion of pastoralists as a necessary prerequisite to redress ongoing trends.

The Declarations issued in 2013 in N'Djamena and Nouakchott reiterated the need for effective inclusion of pastoralists and their institutions in political dialogue in an integrated and transnational perspective, as a strategic way to improve stabilisation and development in the region. These were further echoed by the UN-led Farmer Forum in 2016, which reaffirmed that pastoralists are the best allies in securing and governing vast dryland territories. Not much has been changing for the better since these high-level policy engagements.

Engaged researchers and civil society have long demonstrated that mobile livestock-keeping is the most effective way to support food security, resilient livelihoods and sustainable rangeland management. There is a growing literature on lessons learnt and best practices to overcome past misconceptions and mistakes. Opportunities to actively engage and support pastoralists thus exist, on paper. Translating good intentions and wishful thinking into effective institutional arrangements and governance practices seems a much more challenging endeavour, as in most SSA countries the policy framework addressing pastoral areas is embroiled in poor understanding, biased perspectives, bureaucratic approaches, and distorted interests. Despite the growing calls for change, inclusion, and investments, the situation in most Sub-Saharan Africa drylands has worsened, and development perspectives have given way to humanitarian and securitarian ones.

Inexorably, like a background blinding light continually seeping through the cracks of supposedly comprehensive approaches, prejudices against pastoralism and pastoralists endure as a persistent feature in most institutions, legislative frames, and investment patterns. Most policy circles remain obstinately unfavourable to extensive livestock producers, and the underpinning biases are often echoed in educational patterns as well as in media narratives. As a result, the paradigm whereby pastoralism is but a backward, inefficient, and unsustainable practice remains quite pervasive, even in new generations of public officers, authorities, and policymakers throughout the continent. This makes formal institutions and development agencies poorly suited and ill-equipped to deal with the complexity of pastoral systems, and contributes significantly to undermining their capacity and legitimacy vis-à-vis local communities.

Despite the evident shortcomings of the techno-scientific model to standardise and stabilise livestock production by restricting pastoralists' complex relationships with dryland ecosystems, a more proactive message has not yet passed through the policy pipelines. The very same features that make pastoralists resilient and enable their contribution to regional food security and economy — mobility, flexible resource management, and transnational networks — continue to cause their marginalisation and neglect by national states and development agencies. Agricultural, food, land, and trade policies have evolved accordingly at the disadvantage of pastoralists, as politicians and investors tend to favour settled populations and prefer to deliver aid to demographically-dense farmland areas and urban settings, instead of targeting remote and difficult-to-reach areas and populations, where transaction costs would be higher and political benefits lower.

The persistent mismatch between evolving scientific evidence, broader policy narratives, and daily practices on the ground is quite striking, and not free from consequences amongst pastoralists. The degrading livelihood and security conditions in most SSA drylands are evidently the outcome of misinformed policies and poorly conceived investments, as much as the sense of marginalisation and political and economic grievance amongst herding communities results from years of exclusion from the policy arena. The current crisis affecting large parts of SSA drylands is primarily a reflection of the crisis in the governance system.

Since the lack of involvement of pastoralists' capacities, interests and needs in societal development and policy dialogue is a main acknowledged shortcoming, part of the solution undoubtedly depends on providing pastoral communities with full political and legitimate representation. The testing ground rests no doubt in securing pastoralists' livelihood assets, starting from their land, their livestock, and their mobility. A new social contract is needed, and redressing the political economy in Sub-Saharan African drylands by protecting the rights and needs of pastoralists from prevailing political and economic interests is the key to redress current governance failure.

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Appendix

Shifting intervention perspectives in drylands

Approach	Strategy
Investing in rangeland productivity	mostly water, animal health, land management, and technical responses
Security and conflict	securitarian approach as priority for drylands approaches
Governance and integration	mainstream pastoralism into policies at different levels, including decentralisation and reliance of customary institutions
Humanitarian perspective	drylands doomed and local populations in need of recurrent, structured assistance
Diversifying out of pastoralism	includes investing in drylands HP areas and trickle-down approaches
High-reliability approach	makes effective use of variability; risk management rather than minimisation

Source: author's elaboration on Janet et al. 2017



Kinna, Kenya. Credit: M. Nori, Pastres.

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