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TRANSFORMING
PASTORAL LANDS
AND LIVELIHOODS IN
EASTERN AFRICA

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Lands of the Future: transforming pastoral lands and livelihoods in eastern Africa¹

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Abstract

Pastoral and agro-pastoral areas in eastern Africa and elsewhere on the continent have long been regarded as peripheries, especially in economic terms, but also in terms of social and cultural accomplishments. Although biased perceptions of the ‘unproductive’ uses of pastoralism have become outdated, government policies still do little to formally recognise or integrate pastoral lands as critical parts of rural livelihood systems and economic development models. Instead, many states give preference to large-scale agricultural investments in pastoral areas, resulting in the loss or fragmentation of rangelands, induced sedentarisation of pastoralists, and a radical reduction in livestock numbers. The *Lands of the Future* Research Network supports the view that alienation of pastoralists from productive lands often is unwarranted, unproductive, and unadvisable. In such cases it would be better for the overall economy and society to leave things as they are, or, if ‘development’ comes in, to discuss the development potential of pastoralism. In other cases of integrated economies, combining old and new forms (‘mixed agriculture’ on a societal scale) might offer advantages to all groups of participants as well as the national economy. Drawing on research from Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Tanzania our paper looks at the significance of pastoralism as a productive economy and the positive bearing it has on the environment, wildlife conservation, and on the health and well-being of pastoral communities. The paper also reflects on what is at stake when one form of land use is replaced by another and when customary rules and practices regarding land access, land use, and traditional law are not fully recognised by policy makers. Using historical examples (e.g. from Afar) and current development trends (e.g. Ethiopia’s river basin development in the Omo Valley), the paper shows how the impacts of such development need not be negative (e.g. forced displacement, resettlement, conflict). The authors urge development planners and governments to integrate the expertise of agro-pastoralists into development models and to establish strong relationships between investors, NGOs, GOs, policy makers, researchers, local communities, and other stakeholders in order to find equitable and long-term solutions for changing land uses.

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Introduction

Pastoralists throughout the world are facing times of turbulent transition. In the past decade, global economic trends have increasingly become investment reality in pastoralists' territories. Changing land use patterns and disturbances to the environment and livelihoods of pastoralists are obvious in areas like eastern Africa, which is home to one of the largest concentrations of (nomadic, transhumant, and agro-) pastoralists in the world. Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities, who live in these emerging areas of investment and who engage in subsistence economies within larger socio-economic networks, are and will continue to be significantly affected by large-scale commercial investments, both domestic and foreign, by resettlement schemes and by the increasing changes in land holding and land use within their territories, whether externally or internally induced.

Governments, politicians, and local communities; NGOs and human rights organisations, activists, investors, and investment brokers; as well as scholars from different disciplines represent divergent voices concerning the implications of investments within pastoral territories. More often than not, these voices seem irreconcilable. The *Lands of the Future* Research Network wants to join efforts and to search for solutions where conflicts of interest occur, above all, to prevent serious conflict scenarios that would arise when divergent interests harden into opposing fronts. Since many pastoral regions, such as in Asia (cf. IIED 2013a on China), have already undergone problematic change and transformation, the *Lands of the Future* Research Network will view the problems and challenges in eastern Africa on a comparative basis.³

Pastoral Land Use and Policy

The productive use of rangelands through “mobile livestock husbandry has long defined the most effective strategy for extracting value out of otherwise marginal lands, and in so doing feeding growing millions” (Galaty 2013: 152f). Yet, in the past decade the most valuable pastoral lands have become subject to large-scale agricultural investment, resulting in the loss or fragmentation of rangelands, induced sedentarisation of pastoralists, and a radical reduction in livestock numbers. Where the richest rangeland areas are withdrawn from the store of resources accessed by pastoralists for dry season grazing, in favour of cultivation, the overall productivity of the land may even decline, pastoralists having little say regarding alternative land uses. With many governments in East Africa claiming a state monopoly on land, more needs to be done to assure the rights and resources of pastoralists as *partners* in the new development ventures and to make better informed choices as to the best long-term use of their lands.

First, there is the elementary issue of the rights, both customary and statutory, of (agro-) pastoralists in Africa to be economically active and politically recognised citizens of their own countries. In their introduction to *Pastoralism and Development in Africa: dynamic change at the*

³ During a workshop called *Lands of the Future* at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, Germany on March 4–5, 2013, prominent anthropologists were invited to discuss the future of pastoralism in Africa. This workshop resulted in the creation of the *Lands of the Future* Research Network (LOF), which addresses some of the pressing issues related to the adaptation and transformation of pastoral peoples to large-scale land acquisitions and other forms of investment in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas of eastern Africa. The *Lands of the Future* Network – open to scholars and practitioners from all disciplines – aims to raise levels of pertinent knowledge about pastoralism within changing economies and contends that neither pastoralists nor ‘friends of pastoralism’ are standing in the way of development, but are valuable partners in the process.

margins, Catley et al. (2013: 6, 21) point to the new policy framework of the African Union (AU), which stresses the rights of pastoralists, including the right of access to spatially distributed resources, and the urgency of maintaining and enhancing pastoral mobility as a time-tried strategy to attain efficient use of grazing resources while avoiding environmental degradation (see also Schlee 2010 for a review of the AU's policy). The *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa* (African Union 2010) is one of the most remarkable examples of a policy document that counters the long-standing anti-pastoralist bias in Africa by recognising their crucial contributions to regional food systems, social support systems, ecosystems, and trade.

In Ethiopia, for instance, regional states with a high proportion of pastoralists, such as the Afar Regional State, have started to develop their own land policies, which to some extent take the needs of pastoralists into account (Abebe and Solomon 2013: 189ff). Some, however, remain sceptical of the outcome of this process. In the chapter, *The Need to Strengthen Land Laws in Ethiopia and to Protect Pastoral Rights*, Abebe and Solomon note that:

“While the 1994 constitution of Ethiopia includes a provision guaranteeing that pastoralists are not [to be] displaced from rangelands, other provisions in existing federal policy and law reaffirm the powers of the state to expropriate land in pastoral areas for development.” (Abebe and Solomon 2013: 193)⁴

This means that modern transformations of arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), the resource base of rural pastoralists, often occur through legal frameworks that continue to deny local communities their historical, customary rights to land, and/or proper compensation for lost land or land use changes. In fact, many state policies do little to formally recognise or integrate pastoral lands as critical parts of rural livelihood systems and economic development models. Instead, most governments still regard the lands of pastoralists as ‘idle’, ‘degraded’, or ‘unproductive’ and therefore in need of ‘development’ by local and foreign investors. As this paper shows, however, such anti-pastoralist biases have become outdated. While indeed there are signs of change toward more pro-pastoralist policies, it would be in the best interest of states to take seriously the moral and political considerations that drive such change, as well as the sound economic (Schlee 2013) and ecological reasons (cf. Notenbaert et al. 2012) for doing so.

Pastoralism as a Productive Economy

There is an emerging consensus among scholars and practitioners dealing with range management and livestock production systems that, for immense areas in Africa and in ASALs in other parts of the old world, dry belt food production can only take the form of mobile livestock production (Schlee 2013; for a global overview, see Khazanov and Schlee 2012). Catley et al. (2013: 7) note that in 2010 the value of pastoral livestock and meat trade approached one billion USD for the Horn of Africa alone. They provide examples showing that “the livestock trade networks emerging from pastoralist areas of the Horn are so massive that Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia can be categorized as ‘high export’ countries” and that pastoralists “have adapted to, rather than ignored, market demands and opportunities” not only reacting to the increasing demand for meat in their respective countries but on the international market (Catley et al. 2013: 6ff; McPeak and Little 2006; Little 2014). Mahmoud's work on camel trade in northern Kenya examined the vibrant camel

⁴ See for instance Articles 40.5 and 41.8 of the Constitution.

marketing activities in the northern Kenyan/southern Ethiopian borderlands (Mahmoud 2013). Focusing on the Moyale market on the Kenyan/Ethiopian border, Mahmoud's study describes how herders and traders respond to emerging market opportunities in dynamic and innovative ways. Pastoralist innovation is key to risk mitigation and survival in an uncertain environment and most importantly to livelihood improvement (see also Scoones and Adwera 2009; Mahmoud 2006, 2013). The emergence of an increased demand for camels and camel meat in Arab countries and the overwhelming response from pastoral communities in the wider region to participate in that trade supports the premise of an on-going pastoral innovation in livestock marketing with the potential to transform the livestock-based economy with direct benefits to local herders.

Alongside the crucial importance of livestock production for both the national economy and local livelihoods, the significance of livestock in maintaining social relations, exchange networks, and cultural survival is a sociological feature of stability that also remains unacknowledged in most government policies (Homewood et al. 2012: 16).

It should not be forgotten that pastoralist systems in eastern Africa and elsewhere on the continent are largely *agro*-pastoralist, and that they are already significantly connected to networks of local exchange and trade, and to local agrarian cultivation systems (see, e.g. Gabbert 2012: 19ff; Workneh 2011). Thus, simply taking pastoralist areas "out of production" and dedicating them solely to other uses – of which the long-term socio-economic outcomes are significantly unpredictable – would undermine the agricultural-pastoral synergies that enhance both the value and benefits of each through complementary land use (Schlee 2013). This and similar points are convincingly made by Behnke and Kerven *Counting the Costs: replacing pastoralism with irrigated agriculture in the Awash Valley* (2013a), John Galaty *Land Grabbing in the Eastern African Rangelands* (2013), and Mustafa Babiker *Mobile Pastoralism and Land Grabbing in the Sudan: impacts and responses* (2013) in the recent volume by Catley, Lind and Scoones (2013). As they and others argue, there are sound economic reasons for viewing anti-pastoralist policies and calls for "the end of pastoralism" as misguided, counterproductive, and obsolete (Schlee 2013; IIED 2013b).

Behnke's and Kerven's findings for the Awash Valley show, for example, that state-owned, large-scale, irrigated cotton or sugar cane production yields lower returns per hectare than would the gross value of animal husbandry (live animals, meat, and milk) carried out by pastoralists, not even counting the loss of surfaces suitable for any kind of crop or fodder production due to forms of irrigation that lead to increased soil salinity. They show "with reasonable certainty that pastoralism can be either economically comparable or more advantageous than either cotton or sugar cane cultivation" (Behnke and Kerven 2013b: 10). Projections of revenues under different forms of land use in Loliondo District in northern Tanzania (TNR 2011), for example, show that per hectare revenues from livestock sales based on extensive pastoral production compare favourably to those from alternative uses, including tourist revenues from the Serengeti National Park, hunting concessions, and photo safaris (Galaty 2013: 148f). To some extent, except for park revenues, these other uses need not exclude pastoralism, because, with a bit more good will and organisation, wildlife, tourism, and extensive pastoralism can be made to *coexist* and the income from various activities combined when calculating the potential productivity of a region.

Babiker (2013) does not give figures comparing the income derived from the transition to mechanised crop production with the losses that this process entails to pastoral production in the Sudan, but his discussion of the negative impact that this transition has on pastoralists and the

wider society makes it likely that, for the overall economy, the corresponding losses caused by this kind of development exceed the gains – or at least diminish them considerably. The costs include the following: hostility between pastoralists and large-scale farmers (a ‘security’ issue, which, like all such issues, also has a financial side); decline of the remaining, congested rangelands; high costs of supplementary fodder, a factor that squeezes out owners of small herds; and intensive litigation about ‘trespassing’, caused by the expansion of agriculture into long-established but no longer properly enforced livestock corridors, which, after having been reduced from grazing areas to mere routes, are now often blocked completely by cultivated fields (Babiker 2013: 181f). With unintended irony, one of Babiker’s sources speaks of “the encroachment of herding on croplands”, while historically the encroachment has, of course, happened the other way round (ibid.: 179). This encroachment continues today in East Africa. In Sudan, it has strongly contributed to the devastating civil war in Darfur since 2003, at a huge human and economic cost (Prunier 2009). In many areas of eastern Africa pastoral lands are increasingly threatened by the hasty, large-scale land acquisitions for commercial purposes, causing biodiversity loss and putting food security at risk. Costs of the new mega-farms often also appear to be much higher than anticipated and profit margins somewhat disappointing (for biofuels, cotton, and maize), due to insufficient feasibility studies on soil quality, water needs, and other environmental aspects. Some projects have already been significantly scaled down and led to government policy adjustments.⁵ In Tanzania and Ethiopia, for instance, the rush by foreign investors to secure land, ostensibly for agricultural production, though in fact for no purposes beyond hoarding and speculation, has led the government to threaten re-nationalisation of land left idle.⁶

Pastoralism and the Environment

In addition to its direct contribution to market economies, pastoralism plays an essential role in the protection of biodiversity and local food security. Pastoralists have an intimate knowledge about their environment, which contributes in significant ways, for example, to the protection of grasslands, trees, and forests/bushlands, which are integral to the pastoral economy and the basis for much of the diet of pastoralists (Notenbaert et al. 2012). Something often overlooked by policy makers is the critical contribution that forest and bushland foods and resources make to the food portfolio of pastoralists. The nutritional value of forest and bush flora is substantial among many herding communities. For instance, among the Mursi, agro-pastoralists in southern Ethiopia, over 50 wild leaf varieties provide an excellent source of vitamins A and C, protein, calcium, and iron. Fruits, such as berries, and forest plants, such as roots, are also used for their important medicinal properties (LaTosky 2013). Other examples are the food intake patterns of the Bodi, Me’en, Dizi, Suri, Nyangatom, and Kara peoples. Neighbouring, more agricultural people like the Ari also use such forest and bush resources. Given the importance of forest areas (e.g. the riverine forests) to the pastoral economy, many researchers and NGOs are urging governments and development partners to increase investments while also engaging pastoral people in support of sustainable forest management and the rehabilitation of degraded forest lands (Sunderland et al. 2013; see also Daniel and Aregai 2010).

⁵ See: Aman Sethi, Karuturi Debacle Prompts Ethiopia to Review Land Policy, *The Hindu* (India), June 1, 2013.

⁶ See: Daily News Reporter, Develop it or Give it Back, Idle Land Hoarders Told, *Daily News* (Tanzania), October 8, 2013.

A considerable body of ecological research in arid and semi-arid areas in eastern Africa shows that the extensive land use practices of pastoralists also have a major bearing on the conservation of savannah wildlife populations and ecosystems (Nelson 2012; Homewood et al. 2012). Sustainability aspects enter the picture here. Given the overall ecological compatibility between the livestock of pastoralists and wild large mammals, pastoralism is not only critical for maintaining forest areas, but also wildlife populations and the savannah lands they inhabit (ibid., see also Homewood and Rogers 1991). Nelson has pointed out that

“(…) 65% of Kenya’s wildlife is today found on community and private lands, with only 10% in national parks and about 25% of that accounted for by the Maasai Mara National Reserve alone (Western et al. 2009a). In other words, pastoralists and other landholders host the majority of Kenya’s wildlife populations, sustaining these key assets in the national tourism industry (Norton-Griffiths 2007).” (Nelson 2012: 7)

Pastoralist land management practices not only have implications for the protection of biodiversity, but for regional and national economies as well. In northern Tanzania alone, “the annual value of pastoralist land uses to the wildlife-based tourism industry is estimated at approximately US \$83.5 million” (Nelson 2012: 1). Policy objectives should thus support the mutual benefits between pastoralism, biodiversity, and wildlife conservation.

From Local Pastures to Global Markets

Pastoral areas in eastern Africa have long been regarded as peripheries not only in economic terms: power holders in the centres have also often failed to acknowledge the distinct forms of land use, knowledge, and cultural accomplishments of the groups living in those territories (Markakis 2011: 7; see also Schlee with Shongolo 2012; Abbink 2002: 157; Dereje 2013; Girke 2013). For people living in the periphery of the expanding Abyssinian empire and British colonies, it was politically and economically more viable to rely on their direct neighbourhood networks. In contrast, the current impact and behaviour of unfamiliar national or global actors, such as the state, missionaries, NGOs, and international entrepreneurs, who are increasingly interested in pastoral areas, reflect vast asymmetrical power relations.

The relations of local populations to national and international investors pose an additional challenge, as the politics, economies, and fates of people, who have never met, are merged through globalised market dynamics rather than through human encounters. Investors often have never visited the territories their companies invest or work in, yet their presence can have a significant impact on people’s lives, raising questions about the future of these new encounters: How can these ‘virtual neighbours’ develop understanding, knowledge, and respect for each other? What efforts are made to create face-to-face relations with each other in spite of the spatial distance of national and multinational planning offices to the grass root level? How do corporate policies enable or encourage managers and migrant workers on farms to build relationships with local communities? And how can investments in agriculture take account of existing land tenure and livelihood systems and practices that will be affected by changing land use?

The concept of “global neighbourhood” (Gabbert 2013)⁷ provides methodological and analytical tools to approach challenges and conflicts of investment on pastoral land in a realistic manner. While extreme positions often characterise the present discourse about investments, especially about large-scale land acquisitions, the underlying principles set out for a functioning cultural neighbourhood (Gabbert and Thubauville 2010), such as effort, time, interest, communication, respect, and mutual knowledge, help us to understand that conflict induced by new encounters in a changing global environment is almost inevitable. Realists would contend that it cannot be otherwise, because without a history of communication, contact, and exchange there must be a lack of mutual knowledge between new neighbours, which is partly caused by the limited time the two parties have to get to know each other. This leads to the ‘Other’ appearing unpredictable to both sides, followed by misunderstandings and misbehaviour that exacerbate the inherent potential for conflict, e.g. between local populations and farm employees, resulting in higher risks and costs for all parties.

With an increasing pace, national and global newcomers on pastoral territory, e.g. investors and migrant workers for emerging enterprises, come with their own missions and interests to regionally defined cultural neighbourhoods, while often initially lacking the knowledge about (and interest in) their counterpart’s cultures, economies, and ways of communication. Varied socio-economic realities, levels of expertise, and perceptions on land use – not only between new neighbours but also within communities and enterprises – make it impossible to apply normative approaches to these encounters (Evers 2012). The quality of the developing relationship between neighbours, far or distant, will therefore always depend on the time, effort, and creativity invested in learning from obstacles to reach mutual understanding and respect. In a globalised era, where space and time are compressed by fast communication, fast transportation, and fast markets (Harvey 1989), where neighbours do not necessarily have to meet in person, the investment of time as a highly valued asset, before and during an investment project is essential to measure efforts that aim at greater food security locally and globally.⁸ A plea for considerate timing is not to be mistaken for attempts to halt necessary investment in agriculture and national food security, but to slow down hasty calculations that promise short-term rewards from agricultural investments that cannot possibly be sustainable. Realistic approaches to improving food security also take into account that benefits cannot be expected to automatically follow from generalised economic development projects that might indeed lead to demonstrable impoverishment of local populations. If too many mistakes are made during initial project phases this might hinder its success in the long run and instead generate denial or even resistance. Therefore, the thoroughness and integrity of environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA), and planning and action based on these, will determine the quality of a cooperative approach to development and investment that can (or cannot) be carried out with recognition and support by all stakeholders (Gabbert 2013).

⁷ Articles which are based on the presentations of Gabbert, Strecker and Tewolde and Fana at the 2013 conference “Large Scale Agricultural Investments in Pastoral Lowlands of the Horn of Africa: Implications for Minority Rights and Pastoral Conflicts” at the IPSS (Institute for Peace and Security Studies), Addis Ababa University, mentioned in this paper, will be published in the conference proceedings.

⁸ “Assessment according to economic returns creates pressure for investment professionals to maximise profit to the detriment of other considerations (...).” (IIED 2012: 3)

Customary Land Use and Pastoral Land Rights

Indigenous communities are self-sufficient in making productive use of forests and rangelands for their own subsistence, while often contributing to regional markets, but for this they must have secure access to critical resources. The importance of land in pastoralist and other indigenous communities for purposes beyond subsistence has been well noted in anthropological literature as well as in global policy documents. The UN Human Rights Committee, for instance, has stated that, “(...) To enjoy a particular culture may consist in a way of life which is closely associated with territory and use of its resources. This may be particularly true of members of indigenous communities (...)” (quoted in Barume 2010: 51). Beyond pasture and water access, pastoralist communities typically require access to traditional medicines, sacred sites, initiation sites, salt licks, and burial sites (among other purposes).

Barabaig pastoralists of Tanzania, for instance, who lost a large proportion of their lands (over 100,000 hectares) to a state-owned, Canadian-funded wheat farming venture in 1968, tried to stop the appropriation of their land through testimonials by elders that appealed for consideration of the community's ties to the grave sites of their ancestors. Particularly esteemed individuals, they explained, were not buried in the same manner as other community members but were interred in elaborate graves that took more than two years to construct (Barume 2010). Their pleas fell on deaf ears, the wheat scheme prevailed, the graves were bulldozed, and all of the Barabaig evicted. After the wheat farms failed, the Barabaig sued to reclaim their land (Lane 2006). However, they lost on a technicality: their inability to provide documentary evidence of being “native” to Tanzania, despite it being a well-known fact that Barabaig are not found anywhere else (Tenga 2011).

A recurring problem for pastoralist peoples in eastern Africa is the weak recognition of their customary rules and practices regarding land access, land use, and traditional law. While pastoralists were living in the areas well before modern state authorities arrived and were following time-honoured traditions of land- and resource use that helped them survive and even thrive, statutory state law often tends to overrule customary law, including dispute resolution mechanisms and redistribution rules. State authorities seem ill-equipped to conceptually and practically deal with open access and customary use and regulations of commonly-held pastoral lands, although they in principle recognise their value and relevance. Moreover, in states such as Tanzania, where land legislation requires land owners to demonstrate ‘use’ or run the risk of confiscation, pastoralists and hunter-foragers are disadvantaged since, unlike cultivators whose rows of planted maize or beans clearly index usage, pastoralist and hunting-gathering land use is often invisible, rendering their historical claims on the land precarious. Based on the Lockean principle that property emanates from the investment of labour, failure to break the soil leaves pastoralists and hunters seemingly without rights, despite centuries of land-use that in fact shaped the forest and savannah landscapes of eastern Africa. This agrarian bias in land tenure is intimately connected to the discourse of *terra nullius*, which defines lands exploited by mobile pastoralists or shifting cultivators as if they were “empty” waiting for capitalist redemption (Makki 2014).

Future development and national policy toward pastoralists might pay more attention to the positive aspects of customary pastoral land use. This would also help prevent armed clashes between local pastoralists not informed about national state law that is proclaimed “applicable” to their lands or about new investment schemes that are introduced without their knowledge or without their having been consulted. Unfortunately, needlessly violent clashes between state forces

and pastoralists have occurred across eastern Africa over the past years. From what we know from field research, pastoralists are, however, not against new socio-economic developments (see e.g. Gabbert 2012: 222ff), but like any citizen would like to be informed and be made partners to them – and have rights thereto, in accordance with constitutional principles and national law.

Indeed, pastoralists have tried time and again to secure or reclaim their land rights in courts of law. For the most part, due to bias within the court systems against pastoralist livelihoods and due to lack of access to quality legal representation, these efforts have been mired in failure. Take, for example, the “Masai Case of 1913” documented by Lotte Hughes (2006) in which Purko Maasai were forcibly relocated in 1911 from their territory in northern Kenya to arid plains in the south and who took their case to court but lost due to technicalities that today seem astonishing. And recently, commanding international attention, was the case of Loliondo in Tanzania’s Ngorongoro District, where Maasai, who had suffered expulsion in 1959 from their territory in what is now the Serengeti National Park, in 2013 faced relocation and reduction of their pastures to accommodate a private Arab hunting concession. The allocation of 1,500 sq km of pastoralist lands was insisted on by the government in direct violation of rights held by eight Maasai villages whose official registration was established through the surveying and certification of their boundaries (Renton 2009). However, an international campaign waged primarily in the media against the evictions, which secured nearly two million online signatures, has secured an apparent reversal of policy by the government. Two recent Maasai land cases achieved legal victories in Tanzania, both at the highest court in the land – the Court of Appeal (Askew et al. 2013) – but these have remained hollow victories: the government argues it lacks funds to evict the illegal farmers occupying Maasai lands, even as every day it initiates new ‘operations’ to evict pastoralists from areas newly designated as exclusively agricultural.

The trend away from mixed purpose land use, whereby farmers and pastoralists shared access to the land in seasonal turn, towards exclusive agricultural use is driven largely by foreign investors, who expect and want to be assured of exclusive access. Unfortunately, it is often the case that “the current wave of FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] flows and land acquisitions is taking place in contexts where many people have only insecure land rights – which makes them vulnerable to dispossession.” (Cuffaro and Hallam 2011: 7) The authors add that:

“[o]ne common characteristic of countries targeted for large scale acquisitions is the fact that the state ‘owns’ large amounts of land, and such land, even if occupied by traditional users, is easily transferred to outsiders, often in less than fully transparent ways. Respecting land and resource rights would require, according to FAO et al. (2010) a systematic process of recognition and demarcation of land rights, which, it is argued, is much preferable to the identification of land rights on a case by case basis; use of expropriation strictly circumscribed and with prompt and fair compensation (...); clear and transparent mechanisms to transfer land rights, since many countries dispose of public land in an *ad hoc* way that can be source of corruption and patronage.” (Cuffaro and Hallam 2011: 10f)

There is a pressing need for the development of modern state policies in eastern Africa to reassess and fundamentally recognise the customary arrangements and rules in pastoral economies that give people the right and the opportunity to make a living and secure their future livelihoods. A substantial body of research (for a few examples, see Abdulahi 2007; Ahmed and Yared 2008; Bekele 2008, 2010; Dessalegn 2011; Pavanello and Levine 2011; PFP 2010; Watson 2003) is available to draw upon for the constructive incorporation of locally relevant customary rules and

practices in future development initiatives for pastoralist groups. Such acceptance would not only be granted on the basis of the human- and land rights of those affected, but also out of recognition of the economic contributions that pastoralists and hunter-gatherers make to national economies, a fact frequently forgotten in the rush to attract the tantalising if elusive profits promised by global agro-industrial corporations.⁹

The Sedentarisation, Displacement, and Resettlement of Pastoralists

The large-scale acquisition of land by states and investors usually promises benefits to farmers, forest-dwellers, or pastoralists who are often forcibly settled or displaced. However, these benefits are rarely enjoyed by those who pay the price for such top-down initiatives. Sedentarisation has long been the standard formula for ‘development’ of the pastoral sector the world over. This also applies to the Greater Horn of Africa. The settlement of pastoralists in agriculture-based villages is seen as the panacea for the perceived problems of water and pasture scarcity in semi-arid areas ill-suited to rain-fed agriculture, despite the often adequate adaptation pattern of pastoralists vis-à-vis their difficult environment. That the difficulties for pastoralists have increased in many areas cannot be denied (e.g. in Sudan, Chad, Somalia, or Kenya), but the reasons for it usually are: the encroachment of agriculture and commercial farming on some of the few well-watered areas of arid lands indispensable for pastoral land use, and the stripping of resources from pastoral areas without sharing arrangements.

Pastoralists are usually described as ‘poor’ and ‘food-insecure’. Although many periodically are (while many are not), they would not necessarily become wealthy and food-secure if they were induced to go over to cultivation. In their volume *As Pastoralists Settle*, Fratkin and Roth (2005) show, for example, that one of the consequences of sedentarisation on the health and well-being of pastoralist populations in northern Kenya is poorer nutrition (see *ibid.* chapters 6–11). Sedentarisation based on static agriculture is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges of all pastoral peoples, but reflects a governmental preference for attaining better control over them, and privileging other actors. Besides, many pastoralists, for example in southern Ethiopia, already successfully practice cultivation, e.g. along river banks and fields in the higher altitudes (via shifting cultivation). These existing practices should be built upon in developmental policy.

The forced displacement of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the name of national development and nation-building is a source of recurring instability and upheaval. Considered as a worldwide category, people displaced and resettled because of development projects (including dam building, irrigation development, urban clearances, and road building) share three main characteristics. First, they are surprisingly numerous – on average at least 15 million a year or 300 million over the past twenty years (Cernea and Mathur 2008: 20). If we were to add those who have not been physically displaced from their homes but who have lost access to land and other resources as a result of development projects, the numbers would undoubtedly increase.

Second, they are disproportionately members of ethnic minorities and therefore tend to be economically disadvantaged and politically marginalised. For example, fifty per cent of those

⁹ Valuable contributions to these discussions are made by several organisations, networks, and institutions such as the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC), Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Sustainable Use of Natural Resources & Peace in Pastoralist Areas in Africa (SUNARPA), Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia (PFE), Oakland Institute, Land Matrix, LANDac, International Land Coalition, GRAIN, Human Rights Watch, Contested Global Landscapes, International Rivers, and Survival International.

displaced by the Narmada Dam, in Gujarat Province of northwestern India, belonged to ‘tribal’ populations, who account for only eight per cent of the total Indian population. Commenting on this, Indian author Arundhati Roy, who has been a vigorous campaigner on behalf of those displaced by the Narmada Dam, writes: “The ethnic otherness of their victims takes some pressure off the Nation Builders. It’s like having an expense account. Someone else pays the bills. People from another country. Another world. India’s poorest people are subsidizing the lifestyles of her richest.” (Roy 1999: 18f)

Third, those displaced by development projects are typically, if paradoxically, made worse off by the projects that displace them. Hence, one question that draws the most attention in the literature is: why do those who are forced to move by development projects generally become worse off as a result, despite the explicit and well-meaning intention of project planners to achieve exactly the opposite result? Fratkin et al. (2004) found in northern Kenya that the under-nine-year-old children of settled Ariaal Rendille were three times more malnourished than those living in livestock-keeping, mobile communities, which was attributed to the latter group’s access to dairy animals. Furthermore, Rendille women living in settled farming communities on Mount Marsabit were seasonally more malnourished than their nomadic counterparts, due to both poorer foods and a higher workload (Fujita et al. 2005).

Someone, who has probably done more than anyone to help us understand the ‘impoverishment risks’ of forced displacement and how they can be avoided or mitigated, is the anthropologist Michael Cernea, formerly of the World Bank and the principal architect of its “Involuntary Resettlement Guidelines”. His article *The Risk and Reconstruction Model for Resettling Displaced Populations* (1997) must be the single most quoted source in the literature on development-forced displacement.¹⁰ Another much discussed and closely related topic is the role and significance of resistance to forced displacement. Here, one thinks of the work of another anthropologist, Antony Oliver-Smith – especially his book *Defying Displacement: grassroots resistance and the critique of development* (2010). Several ongoing ethno-regional insurgent movements in northeastern Africa have their roots in the resistance of pastoral societies to state impositions and land loss.

It is surprising that the discussion of the future of pastoralism in Africa generally makes little use of the abundant research literature that now exists on development-forced displacement and resettlement – not least surprising because anthropologists have been such major contributors to both bodies of literature. Cernea begins his 1997 article by describing impoverishment as the “central risk” faced by development-displaced people everywhere and as a “major pathology of development”. He goes on to break down the risk of impoverishment into eight principal components, his point being that we know, from a “vast social science and policy literature” (ibid.: 1570), that some or all of these risks will attach, in varying degrees, to any project involving forced displacement. Those which are most relevant to the forced displacement of pastoralists – whether, for example, by national parks or large-scale agricultural development and irrigation schemes – are (1) loss of access to common property resources, including land; (2) economic and social marginalisation; (3) food insecurity and malnutrition; (4) increased morbidity and mortality; and (5) loss of the social support mechanisms people had previously relied on during times of hardship.

¹⁰ See also his more recent edited book (with Hari Mohan Mathur) *Can Compensation Prevent Impoverishment? Reforming resettlement through investment and benefit sharing* (2008), in which he clearly states that compensation is not enough.

These risks can all be guarded against, argues Cernea, and forced displacement and resettlement can be turned into a “development opportunity” for the displaced, if the lessons to be learnt from this “vast (...) literature” are taken to heart. He stresses three points in particular. First, planners should take special measures, targeted at each one of the predicted impoverishment risks rather than being “general and vague in their ‘planning’” (ibid.: 1577). Second, there must be, from the start, effective communication between the planners and those to be displaced. This includes providing full information about the causes and impacts of displacement and ensuring the genuine participation of the affected population in finding acceptable solutions. And third, compensation alone will never be enough to enable the re-establishment of family and community because the costs borne by the affected population are bound to exceed the costs of the physical losses involved. Long-term benefit sharing is therefore necessary.

A good example of how not to go about the displacement and resettlement of pastoralists is provided by the river-basin development in Ethiopia’s Omo Valley. The Omo has long been seen as a river with an excellent hydropower and irrigation potential. It has been estimated, for example, that, once the river’s highly seasonal flow has been regulated by hydropower dams in its upper and middle basins, over 50,000 ha. will become available in its lower basin for reliable large-scale irrigation development (Woodrooffe et al. 1996). In fact, the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation has now begun developing an area more than three times this size, in anticipation of the completion, by 2015, of the Gibe III hydropower dam. Known as the “Kuraz Sugar Development Project”, this will eventually equal the entire area currently irrigated in Kenya. Thousands of agro-pastoralists are already being evicted, by government fiat, from their most valuable agricultural land along the banks of the Omo. The evictions are being accompanied by a resettlement or “villagisation” programme that, although described as voluntary, is forced in the sense that those affected have no reasonable option but to comply. To our knowledge, no environmental impact assessments or feasibility studies have been published. We are also unaware of any plans to compensate those who have lost their agricultural land along the banks of the Omo, let alone to set up targeted long-term programmes of benefit sharing and livelihood reconstruction (see also Makki 2014: 91; Imeru 2010: 13ff). And it is clear that no attempt has been made to give the affected population a genuine say in decision-making.¹¹

In short, none of the lessons identified by Cernea from the research and policy literature on development-forced displacement and resettlement have been learnt in this case. On the contrary, the planning process has been entirely top-down and implementation has been surrounded by a wall of secrecy. So far from genuinely consulting the affected population, strenuous efforts have been made, with the help of police and army units, to intimidate them into compliance with government wishes and to prevent them from talking about the project to outsiders, especially foreigners. The planners apparently believe that the affected people will automatically benefit from generalised economic development and ‘modern’ forms of agriculture. It even seems to be assumed that the agro-pastoralists of the Lower Omo will be better off after resettlement, however they manage to survive and whether they realise this at the moment or not, because they will have been lifted out of the ‘backwardness’ of their former lives as mobile herders. Unfortunately, everything we have

¹¹ “Naturally, there was resistance to the project from the indigenous ethnic groups. This resistance, according to project officials and Wereda and Zone Administrators, is attributed to the ‘lack of awareness’ and ‘backward culture’ of the indigenous people (...). As a result, the direction taken to (...) lower the extent of resistance was an extensive and intensive campaign of discussions, with the objective of making them accept the decision that came up from way above.” (Tewelde and Fana 2013: 8)

learnt from fifty years of research on the consequences of development-forced displacement, as well as from the sorry history of so-called ‘pastoral development’ in Africa and elsewhere, tells us that this expectation, however sincerely held, is a delusion. If irrigation development and resettlement in the Lower Omo continues on its present course, it is virtually certain that it will become known as a text-book example of how not to do river-basin development (Turton 2012) and as a “disgracing stain on development itself.” (Cernea and Mathur 2008: 1)

Cooperative Development and Codes of Conduct for Responsible Investment

To address the challenges described above, there are numerous well-known ‘guidelines’ and ‘codes of conduct’ that aim at good governance on land investments.¹² They have different foci but most refer to the same principles to protect land rights, human rights, environment and social and ethnic integrity. Cuffaro and Hallam (2011: 11) state that among these principles the recognition of existing rights to land and associated natural resources as well as transparency are key to environmental rights, labour rights, and human rights performance of investors and should be both mandatory in investors’ home countries as well as in the host countries. One problem is that none of the guidelines are internationally binding, which is especially difficult in a globalised setting that provides niches of unethical behaviour for national and multinational enterprises. In addition to this, codes of conduct, in spite of their points of convergence, have been criticised for being used to ‘harness’ and legitimise unethical land deals and therefore to provide quick fixes to criticism and failure instead of addressing the larger problems of land acquisition (see Borras and Franco 2010; Evers et al. 2013; The Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform Land Research Action Network 2010).¹³ Serious social and environmental impact assessments cannot be misused as a wild card for investment in land. Instead, they should be part of a comprehensive approach to cooperative and equitable development. This implies that investments that cannot meet certain standards should not be made. The option to retreat must remain viable, especially if there are legitimate social, ethical, economic, or pragmatic reasons, e.g. evidence that production standards cannot be met or that local communities do not benefit, are not involved in the process, or cannot agree after serious consultation (Gabbert 2013).

Omitting the step of safeguarding principles by rushing agricultural investments can become counter-productive, as is the case with an increasing number of land deals that have been negatively labelled and criticised as “land-grabs” (e.g. White et al. 2012; Borras and Franco 2012). “Land grabbing” is characterised by the large size of the land investment, the lack of transparency of the negotiation and implementation of the investment, the incompleteness of contracts (Cuffaro and Hallam 2011), and missing involvement of the local communities who (used to) inhabit the land (see also Abbink 2011). With a growing global interest in land, accompanied by an emerging resistance to land deals or other investments that negatively qualify as “land grabs” on international platforms, the neglect of good practices might lead not only to regional but also to global conflict. Land deals that cannot prove that an ethical approach was taken or address CSR (corporate social responsibility) concerns will become increasingly risky for investors. As guidelines become more binding and court cases against land grabbing are rising in number, compensation payments and

¹² E.g. Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respect the Rights, Livelihoods and Resources (FAO et al. 2010); Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (African Union et al. 2010).

¹³ For an overview of good governance initiatives and a critique, see Ismar (2013).

loss of reputation are lurking in the future for those investors failing to complete these crucial steps. For example, in Ecuador, the Sarayaku people of the Amazon recently filed a case against their government at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In 2012,

“[t]he Court found the State responsible for violating rights of the community of Sarayaku, their ancestral lands and cultural identity, for not granting effective legal protection, and for having placed their life and personal integrity in danger in the presence of seismic explosives within their territory. Among the actions the Court stipulates for the Ecuadorian government are removal of the explosives, payment for damages, and consultation that meets international standards for any development projects that impact Sarayaku territory.” (Pachamana 2012, para. 2f)

In this sense, efforts to establish good relations between investors, states, and local communities must become a routine part of the calculations for possible rewards in the decision-making process before investments are made. Securing respect for the observance of guidelines for responsible investment will depend on sound consultation procedures to establish genuine mutual communication between local populations, governments, and investors. Dereje (2013: 172) notes that the grounds for such a cooperative approach are laid out in, e.g. the Preamble of the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, which states that “the Constitution is based on the voluntary commitment of the Ethiopian ‘Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ to build a political community which ensures lasting peace, economic and social development through mutual support and mutual respect”. Increasingly, investment agencies apply these ideas in their analysis and consultancies. Yet, only time can tell whether and how these principles will be implemented, especially if consultation – with a price tag – must be seriously integrated into decision-making processes.¹⁴ One common objection to cooperation is that “investors are not charity agencies”. Indeed, cooperative efforts before and during a project should not be confounded with “charity” (see Morton 2013: 110). It cannot be sufficient engagement by a major investor to only donate an ambulance to a community (which indeed would be charity, not involvement), but moreover the notion of charity disregards the fact that input from agents and sources of local knowledge are valuable resources that should be acknowledged. If local expertise that has enabled people, like pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, to survive in harsh environments for centuries is merely regarded as “hindering a project” rather than informing it, the legitimacy of the project should again be reflected on, especially by policy makers. For instance, local-level authorities are often experts in managing natural resources. Referring to mistakes made in colonial settings, the economist Daniel Bromley (1991: 110) describes how changing land uses combined with the destruction of authority systems on village levels led to natural resource degradation by stakeholders who were insufficiently knowledgeable and accountable, in other words: interested only in short-term profit. In many pastoralist settings in eastern Africa it is not too late to avoid these mistakes made in other parts of the world.

Additionally, if the integration of peripheral areas in education, health provision, and veterinary care as a valuable part of development plans is to be successful, the contribution of private investment to public resources needs to be well-coordinated. In this context, the comprehensive implementation of improvements for local populations as one promise of investment needs to be immediate, genuine, and be accounted for to prevent exploitative outcomes of land and other

¹⁴ “If the costs of sustainable and fair production are not economically viable, then perhaps the project should not be carried out” (Pangea 2011). Pangea (Partners for Euro-African Green Energy) promotes African bioenergy investments.

investments, a sell-out of resources, and a detrimental turn of win-win promises into scenarios of impoverishment both locally and nationally. In spite of the many obstacles to achieve socially sustainable principles of agricultural investment (see FAO et al. 2010), especially policy makers can play a vital part in creating opportunities for a re-definition of equitable investment in emerging African contexts and again prevent the repetition of mistakes made before in other regions of the world. Therefore, establishing ongoing communication about expectations, needs, and benefits between governments, investors, and local communities from the outset should become part and parcel of well-informed as well as the basis for well-functioning relationships (Gabbert 2013).

One concrete way in which this can be done, as proposed by Ivo Strecker (2013), is to have all parties concerned adhering to an “International Investors Code of Conduct” (IICC) and jointly working out what kind of large-scale and small-scale projects are most appropriate in a given situation.

“Things will go well when no one gets excluded from this process, neither those most directly involved like the investors, local populations, regional administrations and national governments, nor more remote parties like donor agencies, civil rights groups, the media and scholars (...) the International Investors Code of Conduct and the global attempts at more equitable development are intertwined. They are co-emerging and are two sides of a single process.” (Strecker 2013)

Any attempt at furthering equitable development must take historical factors into account in order to generate positive models for intervention and investment that take historical experience into proper consideration. In Ethiopia, for example, this comprehensive approach would converge with the spirit of the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, which states in its preamble that “our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interests”, a new political order imbued with fraternity and supported by acts of solidarity (Constitution of the FDRE 1995: Preamble).

Conflict, Security Dimensions, and Inclusive Policies of Investment

Civic rights of citizens in developing countries, including in eastern Africa, also comprise the pastoral peoples in “marginal” areas. Governments have issued constitutional injunctions and often also pastoral policy papers that pay attention to specific issues pertinent to this sector. Yet there is an observable disconnect between the agenda of developmental states and the rights, livelihood strategies and expectations of local communities (see Schoneveld and Maru 2014: 35; Asnake and Fana 2012: 127).

If land is used, leased or taken without consent, resentment or even aggression can put a project at risk and can also lead to wider discontent. The political economy of land investment in the Gambella region sheds light on the potential for conflict generated by the new land enclosures and the increasing sense of economic exclusion by local communities. Dereje (2013: 183) describes how “virtual monopolies” of highlanders in the peripheral areas of Ethiopia have “created an explosive mix between class and identity, fuelling tension between ‘natives’ and ‘settlers’ – one of the conflict-generating factors in the peripheral areas.” In these cases those perceived as ‘settlers’ are not just foreigners but include Ethiopian investors who come from highland areas close to the

capital city, Addis Ababa, and who are politically more influential and more highly educated than those from ‘peripheral’ areas. At the same time, lack of good governance observed in foreign investments fuels more ‘peripheral discontent’. Two major incidents that occurred in the western region of Gambella where large-scale commercial agriculture is most advanced can be taken as a precursor for the huge potential for conflict induced by large-scale land enclosures. In the attack on the 10,000 hectare, Saudi-owned rice farm in Abobo *woreda* (administrative unit) in April 2012, five people were killed, four Ethiopians and one Pakistani, and eight others suffered injuries. All of the victims of the attack were employees of the Saudi Star Agricultural Business. The Ethiopian National Defence Forces retaliated by raiding the neighbouring villages for allegedly cooperating with the attackers. The incident that occurred in the Majang Zone, Godere *woreda*, Gambella region, in October 2013 is an illustrative case of how the local communities’ sense of economic exclusion and environmental concerns could translate into deadly confrontations. Residents of Godere *woreda* attacked and set on fire the property of an Indian-owned commercial farm on account of destroying the rich forest resources in the *woreda* where the company has acquired some 5,000 hectares of land for tea plantation. Verdanta took over the plantation five years ago from the Ministry of Agriculture on a 50-year lease contract at a fairly low cost. The vigilantes attacked the plantation compound and set ablaze stores, fuel tankers, tractors, excavators, and timber, allegedly harvested from the land the company used for tea plantation. Residents of the area consider the land to be a forest resource. In fact, it is among the 58 primary national forest regions in the country. However, tea plantation requires the entire vegetation to be cleared from the area. Following the incident the regional and zonal governments took punitive measures against what they considered the ‘ring leaders’ of this ‘anti-development’ act. A lack of corporate social responsibility has compounded the problem. For example, the Saudi-owned company in Gambella, as is the case elsewhere in the country, has yet to win the hearts and minds of the local population by actively engaging in providing social services or creating employment opportunities. In fact, the encroachment into the villages despite the investment agreement (the establishment of the farms in nine km distance from the villages) has created mistrust and animosity between the investors and the local population. The Indian-based global commercial farm company Karuturi and its relationship with local communities is another case in point. Karuturi’s burning of the post-harvest maize leftover in February 2013, despite the community’s insistence to make use of it, has raised the question of moral integrity and social responsibility of large-scale investors. Such blatant disregard strained relationships between local communities and foreign investors, who seek protection from government security units instead of building ties with the local communities, as indicated by the armed vehicles that carry the personnel of the commercial farms to and from Gambella town. Dereje states:

“The Ethiopian Federation needs to invest much more in the economic capacity-building of people of the periphery in the spirit of solidarity and fraternity that it has evinced in other domains of social life such as education and the introduction of an equitable budget formula.” (Dereje 2013: 184)

If conflicts arising from development and investment policies are to be prevented, one of the major challenges will be how to achieve solidarity and national cooperation. In other words, if local people cannot identify with land politics, the conflict potential of these enterprises increases. If land is taken in non-transparent ways without returns being locally enjoyed or if decisions about

economy and cultural identities are more or less forced upon people, resentment will inevitably feed unrest or resistance. If people dislike or resent a project, it will not work to its fullest economic and social capacity. Safety measures and maintenance of security will become costly, local support will be undermined and neighbourly relations that are so important will become tense or even hostile.

Mutually achieved consent supported by local populations remains an obvious crucial factor for the positive integration, long-term acceptance, and success of projects, whereas the lack thereof is one of the main obstacles for the peaceful operation of large-scale land projects. More and more (foreign) investors have also expressed a preference for mutually cooperative initiatives.

Lewis et al. (2008) show how sensitive the subject is. In case studies in the Congo Basin they describe that people distinguish qualities of consent between “acceptance of one’s own will”, “acceptance because of weariness of the debate”, “acceptance because of obligation”, and “acceptance with a later lack of promised return”. Lewis et al. (2008: 23) also show that the term “consent”, e.g. in the European understanding, is “[a] definitive agreement (...) made at a specific moment in time”, whereas “consent” in the Congo Basin context depicts “[a]n ongoing relationship of exchange between parties which undergoes revision and renegotiation”. This is not surprising and comes close to the dynamics that mark every new neighbourly relationship, in which terms of cooperation and understanding have to be developed from scratch. Acceptance of and identification with changes is always difficult (see Schlee 2013). Much can be gained by applying respectful attitudes in any human encounter, which demonstrate the acceptance of both customary and statutory law. This commonplace is also meaningful for all stages of investment projects being implemented on pastoral territory. The question of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) before investments in land are made is not only a formal procedure, but an effort that signals the will for inclusiveness and respectful cooperation in the future. Projects that can rely on mutual consent avoid many of the risks carried by projects that lack such cooperation (Gabbert 2013). In this respect, inclusive development policies can contribute significantly to reduce the conflict potential of change; an inclusive policy is one in which the decision makers identify sufficiently with those affected by their policies that they will diligently keep the interests of the latter in mind. If governments do not just react to pressure from below and from outside but also have an image of themselves that they want others to accept, this could encourage them to try to escape from the trap of identifying, and being identified, with narrow interests and, thus, being rejected by large segments of their own people. The members of such a government might amass somewhat fewer riches, but their lives and property would be much safer, and one can assume that they would feel much better. The costs just might be balanced by the benefits (Schlee 2013). Inclusive policies do not just pay lip service but provide feed-back on the process by helping to find solutions to combining pastoralism and agriculture in economically sound and regionally specific ways as in the following examples:

Cotton can be browsed by livestock after harvest. After the extraction of oil from the cotton seeds, the remainder can be pressed into cotton seed cake, a valuable animal feed. When cane is harvested, the upper parts of the plants can be used as animal fodder. After the juice has been squeezed out of the lower parts of the plants, the fibrous remainders are good filling material for animal fodder. They are not very nutritious, but the large stomach of a ruminant needs a lot of substance to fill it. The energy would have to come from another source. This source can be

molasses, the part of the juice which remains after extracting as much sugar as possible and is still very sweet.

In Sudan, land owners who have given part of their land to sugar plantations receive a rent and possibly special deals on by-products of agricultural production for their animals. There is no reason not to try similar measures in other countries, aiming to transform irrigated lands in the vicinity of the rivers into a factor enhancing pastoralism rather than causing its destruction. One would need to grant the pastoralists and their herds access to watering points at the river and at irrigation canals and to replace the seasonal grazing resources they lose by offering them special deals and giving them privileged access to crop residues and by-products of industrial production.

Historical Models as Lessons for Meaningful Engagement: an example from the Awash Valley

The Awash Valley provides a historical example of the conversion of pastoralist land to large-scale irrigated crop production (see also Behnke and Kerven 2013a, b). The case of the Awash River Basin development, which dates back to the days of Emperor Haile Selassie, may serve as a model for other river valleys bordered by alluvial plains in Northeast Africa. Comparable changes are taking place under our eyes in the Lower Omo area in southern Ethiopia (Fratkin 2014), in the Tana River delta in Kenya (Nunow 2013), and along the Blue Nile in Sudan. In the Awash Valley, large-scale irrigation schemes dedicated to commercial agriculture were initiated in imperial times (before the revolution of 1974) and subsequently led to a number of problems, which have also later occurred in other cases and are likely to occur in future development projects in river basins unless planners learn from the past. The Awash River development may serve here as a paradigmatic case, since it is well documented over time. Already in the 1970s, it had become clear that the kind of development pursued in the Awash Valley would neither benefit the local Afar nor large numbers of ordinary Ethiopians but only a coalition of foreign companies and local dignitaries. “[B]ecause capital and know-how has come from abroad (Britain, Israel, USA, Holland and Italy) many of the holdings in the Valley are typical neo-colonialist enterprises which do little to help either the Afar or the people of Ethiopia as a whole.” (Flood¹⁵ 1975: 6) Some of the “costs” (in the diction of Behnke and Kerven 2013a, b) of this development had already been anticipated by the late Glynn Flood almost forty years ago:

Increased inequality and risk of famine. Flood noted that the Great Famine of 1972/3 owed much to misconceived “development” (Flood 1975: 7). The importance of subsistence production, i.e. by which people feed themselves and their communities, is often neglected by planners, who exclusively focus on marketable surplus. Flood observed that “Ethiopia is an extremely poor country, though by no means as poor as figures published by the various agencies of the United Nations suggest. In the sense that a vast majority of Ethiopians are self-sufficient in their daily needs, Ethiopia might be termed very rich. The bulk of the nation’s imports are luxury goods, motor vehicles and machinery. Paradoxically, the result of development is the creation of a large dependent rural proletariat. And even if figures for per capita income increased over the years, it is

¹⁵ “Glynn Flood was an LSE [London School of Economics] doctoral student who argued in 1975 that the Ethiopian government’s agricultural schemes were ignoring the interests of a nomadic group, the Afar or Danakil, to the extent that they created a ‘man made famine’. (...) Flood was killed in the same year by Ethiopian soldiers in the course of their suppression of Afar dissidents.” (Benthall 2002: 6f)

probable that this reflects the growing accumulation of capital in a few hands rather than any general increase in prosperity” (Flood 1975: 8).

Underutilisation of land not included in the irrigation schemes. “When a small area close to the river is made unavailable for dry season grazing, a much larger area away from the river is rendered useless” (Flood 1975: 7). “If the present type of development continues unchecked, the full utilization of the 200,000 irrigable hectares in the Awash Valley will leave many millions of hectares of desert and semi-desert totally under-utilized – for the only people or culture capable of exploiting such land will no longer exist.” (Flood 1975: 8)

Deteriorating security. Violent responses by the nomads to what they perceived as an outside intrusion and a takeover of their land included “the destruction of surveyor’s marking posts and the burning of machinery” (Flood 1975: 7), in addition to forcing their way onto plantations to graze their herds on the crops. Apart from conflicts between farmers and herders (ibid.: 5), different groups of pastoralists also had violent clashes with each other, as groups lost their pastures and were forced to encroach on pastures traditionally belonging to other groups. As Afar lands began to be taken over by the Awash Valley Authority (AVA) in 1962, the relationship of the Afar to Oromo (Kerreyu and Ittu) and Argobba started to decline from a good neighbourly one, even characterised by intermarriage, to one of violent conflict (Rettberg 2010).

Expulsion and replacement of populations. Some Afar engaged in irrigated agriculture themselves in order to protect their land from being taken over by others. Yet others found work as labourers, something which is often advertised as an advantage by planners who stress that local people may find employment on development schemes, but which may be regarded as a kind of downward mobility by people who were formerly independent farmers, agro-pastoralists, or nomadic livestock owners. Still, the general pattern was one of replacement of the former occupants of the lands by immigrants from other parts of the country. Flood concluded that development of the kind that had been going on during this period, and has continued since, would not benefit the local people, would marginally benefit migrants from elsewhere and would not benefit the country as a whole. In his prophetic, concluding paragraph we read:

“If the present situation continues, most of the capital amassed in these enterprises will leave Ethiopia, and the ordinary workers on the farms will maintain a ‘standard of living’ slightly higher than most Ethiopians at the expense of becoming dependent seasonal labourers migrating from the Highlands for harvest times. The original ‘nomads’ will have been replaced by modern wage-labourer nomads.” (Flood 1975: 9)

What Behnke and Kerven (2013a,b) have found 38 years later confirms much of this scepticism.

On the basis of his studies in the same region, Getachew (2001) came up with a similar list of “costs” or negative impacts of misconceived development.

“[T]he results of such policies have been resource scarcity, resource conflicts, herd loss and to drive pastoralists to poverty and dependency on food aid, and settlement in and around towns, rather than to improve their lives as pastoralists.” (Getachew 2001: 117)

The sedentarist bias of development policies that shines through in the policies criticised by Getachew, in spite of decades of scholarly writing against it, is still widespread (cf. Schlee 2012: 1ff; Krätli 2006). Future development-oriented research should make use of the case of the Awash

Valley and derive a kind of checklist of things that might go wrong in comparable projects (Schlee 2013).

The Afar case shows how the control over one form of land use and one predominant export, in this case sugar, are the impetus for many internal conflicts and corrupt political hoarding of wealth. That is, so long as agribusiness-for-export models do not benefit the most vulnerable population in the supply chain, the outcome will be far from equitable. As Strecker shows for the Woyto Valley (Strecker 2013), conflict is not inevitable if the basic maxims of equitable development, such as respecting customary land and water rights and integrating local expertise into collaborative land use models, are followed.

While the Afar historical model embraces a kind of all-or-nothing attitude, i.e. that pastoralism and sugar cane are “mutually exclusive” forms of land use, a model of collaboration could be of great importance when it comes to planning and realising equitable development objectives (Strecker 2013). As these crucial historical examples show, only by meaningfully engaging pastoralists or agro-pastoralists as full partners in (and recipients of) development can equitable outcomes be achieved. Ideally, building equitable ventures that generate returns, employ people, revitalise communities, and integrate pastoralist economic systems into agro-commercial projects are the key methods to secure the future of pastoralists.

Models for Equitable Development

In the light of what we have said, we would like to make the following recommendations:

- 1) Local communities, local level authorities, and traditional knowledge should be seriously integrated and consulted when developing environmentally sound approaches to managing natural resources with a long-term perspective.
- 2) Local people affected by newly implemented projects should meet on a regular basis with administrators, investors, practitioners, and researchers (anthropologists, historians, geographers, biologists, economists, legal experts, etc.) to jointly discuss how traditional forms of production may be fruitfully and sustainably combined with modern industrial farming and other forms of investment.
- 3) Sustainable pathways should involve the implementation of locally-inspired models of equitable development suitable for particular areas.
- 4) Models, including everything from theoretical to land-use change models, should aim at achieving synergetic effects. That is, they should combine both large-scale and small-scale projects in such a way that they mutually complement and support each other. Of particular interest are solutions that show how small-scale projects – often based on traditional know-how – may make optimal and locally beneficial use of by-products generated by large-scale projects.
- 5) There are numerous other ways in which large-scale projects may spawn local entrepreneurship and help develop small-scale projects suitable for specific regions. To effectively design synergetic models, however, requires in-depth investigation and consultation with local communities and other stakeholders.

- 6) In combination with investment schemes, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes should be generated in close collaboration with local communities to develop and redefine CSR in African and in specific local contexts.
- 7) As a first step to equitable development we recommend a research and action programme, which should bring together the expertise of local people, researchers, government and non-government organisations, and investors who are involved and interested in particular problem areas.

Concluding Remarks

As members of the *Lands of the Future* Research Network, our intention is to convey that it is necessary and in the interest of all stakeholders to integrate pastoralist expertise into development models. Alienation of pastoralists from productive lands is unwarranted, unproductive, and inadvisable. That pastoralists in eastern Africa will be increasingly drawn into larger economic and social networks of exchange seems clear, as this has already occurred. But this process works best when agro-pastoralists are engaged by policy-makers, analysts, and investors, who recognise their productive and socio-cultural potential, their agency, and their commitment. Agro-pastoralist groups want to be partners in such wider processes, but also to retain the knowledge, skills, environmental resources, and socio-economic fall-back structures on which they have long depended.

In reassessing (agro-) pastoralism, countries would do well to capitalise on the assets and the diversity these communities already have, all of which are adapted to African geo-physical and economic conditions. It would be strange to emulate Western developmental models (cf. Clapham 2006) if these were to devalue time-tried strategies of pastoralism adapted to tropical conditions that have the unique potential to allow people and local authorities to develop new and inventive ways of building structures of agrarian-herding coexistence and to respond to the opportunities offered by their countries' ecological-geographical diversity. Pastoralism, part of the historically evolved pattern of socio-economic diversity found in eastern African societies, is not by definition a 'sad state' that has to be abolished. In fact, as home to Africa's largest population of domestic livestock, the production of Ethiopia's pastoralists represents one of its greatest resources, contributing in important ways both to its domestic food security and its export incomes.

In this paper we have shared a number of constructive critiques with regard to the neglect and lack of recognition of the productive contributions of pastoralists, to the foreseen costs and sources of conflict, and to development-generated displacement and loss of pastoral economies and cultures. Based on a positive assessment of their socio-cultural and material resources, we have proposed models and policies that would expedite the integration of pastoralism into market economies and the wider society. These observations and recommendations are intended to stimulate a constructive dialogue between the different 'stakeholders' and experts in order to work towards research- and reflection-based joint solutions to the challenges of change, investment, and community-based development for pastoral peoples.

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