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The negotiated politics of social protection in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: Social assistance programmes proliferated and expanded across much of the global South from the mid-1990s. Within Africa there has been enormous variation in this trend: some governments expanded coverage dramatically while others resisted this. The existing literature on social assistance, or social protection more broadly, offers little in explanation of this variation. Drawing on the literature on political settlements and democratic politics, we argue that variation results from the political contestation and negotiation between political elites, voters, bureaucrats, and transnational actors. The forms of politics that matter at each of these inter-related sites of negotiation include struggles over ideas as well as material interests, and reflect the ways in which social assistance is being used to advance certain political as well as developmental projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: social assistance, politics, sub-Saharan Africa, international development organizations
JEL classification: H53, I38, N37, O55

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1 Introduction

In the twenty years since the mid-1990s there has been something of a ‘quiet revolution’ in poverty reduction strategies across the world, with the proliferation and expansion of social assistance programmes that entail direct cash or in-kind transfers to the poor (Hanlon et al. 2010). While different studies define social assistance (and social protection more broadly) in different ways and use different data, generating different estimates of their coverage or reach, they concur that coverage or reach have expanded dramatically across the global South, including in sub-Saharan Africa. These past two decades have also been characterized by a series of important political and political economy developments that have reshaped both state–society relations within sub-Saharan Africa and its relationship with transnational actors and ideas. In this introductory paper for a forthcoming collection of studies¹ in a special issue of the journal *Development and Change*, we argue that the (uneven) expansion of social assistance has to be seen in this context rather than as read-off from general indicators of economic or political development. These developments include highly contested processes of democratization, often involving a (re)assertion of clientelistic and sometimes authoritarian forms of governance, and processes of deagrarianization that continue to transform rural livelihoods in particular.

The nature of Africa’s engagement with external forces has in some cases been transformed by the declining influence of traditional aid actors vis-à-vis ‘rising powers’, new natural resource finds, and the changing nature of international debt. In the evidence and analysis offered in the forthcoming special issue, we show how the process through which social protection has been promoted, contested, and rolled out closely reflects the *negotiated* character of statehood in Africa (Hagmann and Péclard 2011), both in terms of the heavily transnationalized nature of governance in sub-Saharan Africa and also as part of a bargaining process between rulers and ruled, whereby concerns with electoral success, legitimacy, and popular pressures are increasingly influential over budgetary allocations and welfare provision.

We argue that African political agency has played a powerful role in this process, with the countries that reveal the highest levels of commitment to social protection driven more by domestic political imperatives than by external pressure. Importantly, this process has been strongly informed not only by global imperatives and elite-level machinations but also by the historical character of welfare regimes in the region, particularly in terms of long-standing ideas around deservingness and the role of the state in the context of ongoing processes of deagrarianization (Lavers 2013; Seekings forthcoming).

1.1 Tracking the rise of social assistance in sub-Saharan Africa

Definitional debates abound regarding the scope and appropriateness of related but distinct terms such as social assistance, social protection, and social safety nets. While acknowledging the importance of these debates and associated terminology, here our primary focus is on state social assistance programmes that provide support in cash or in kind to households and/or individuals as a means of addressing poverty, vulnerability, or food insecurity. Such schemes are commonly financed through a combination of taxes and development assistance, rather than direct financial contributions from programme participants. As such, our cases include examples of programmes

¹ The articles in the forthcoming special issue are based on the following WIDER Working Papers: Granvik (2016), Hickey and Bukenya (2016), Lavers (2016a, 2016b), Pruce and Hickey (2016), Ulriksen (2016), Hamer and Seekings (2017), Hickey and Seekings (2017) and Seekings (2017a).

such as old age pensions and family allowances that provide income support to vulnerable groups to smooth consumption and mitigate the effects of shocks; programmes such as conditional cash transfers that provide income support to households together with incentives for the utilization of health and education services; and workfare (or public works programmes), especially where such programmes provide something close to an employment guarantee. Social assistance, as defined here, is one component of the broader concept of social protection, which, according to most definitions, also includes social insurance and labour market regulation. In contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, it is social assistance that predominates within broader debates over social protection (Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012; World Bank 2018; Seekings forthcoming).

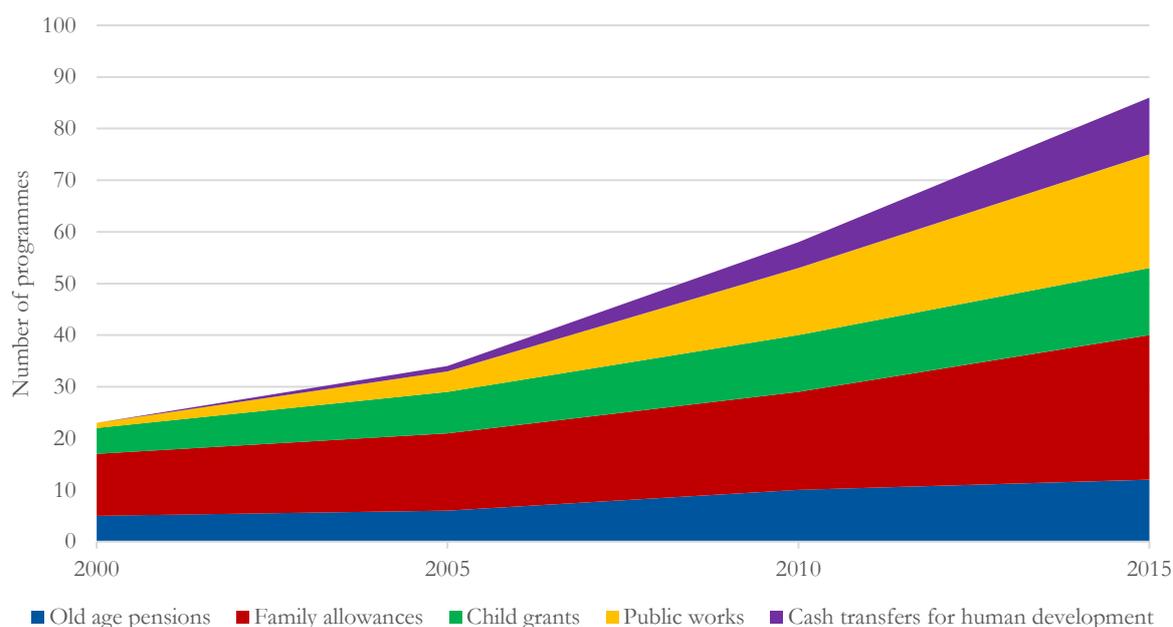
The widespread agreement that social assistance has expanded rapidly across the global South can be demonstrated with data from various sources, including the International Labour Organization (ILO 2017), World Bank (2017b), and also the most recent Social Assistance, Politics and Institutions (SAPI) database (UNU-WIDER 2017).² To illustrate, SAPI suggests that, globally, nearly 900 million people currently benefit, directly or indirectly, from social assistance (UNU-WIDER 2017). African countries lag behind other parts of the global South. The SAPI database counts more than 60 million people—about 15 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty³—currently receiving a cash transfer through a total of 86 programmes in 37 countries (see Table A1 in the Appendix).⁴ The number of countries with social assistance programmes has risen, largely driven by a growing number of public works and family allowances, but also old age pensions, and cash transfers for human development (see Figure 1), although the combined reach of these programmes has risen more modestly. ‘Coverage’ rates and public expenditure might be lower in Africa than in some other parts of the global South (ILO 2017; World Bank 2017b), at least by some definitions of social assistance, but social assistance is very clearly on the agenda of many African countries.

² The SAPI database provides a synthesis of longitudinal and comparable information on: i) social assistance programmes, ii) country-level information on economic and social performance, and iii) political institutions in developing countries. For more information, see UNU-WIDER (2017).

³ Calculations based on the share of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day at 2011 purchasing power parity, as defined by the World Bank (2017a).

⁴ Estimates based on a typology described in Barrientos and Niño-Zarazúa (2010).

Figure 1: The recent evolution of social assistance in sub-Saharan Africa by type of programme



Source: Authors, based on the SAPI database (UNU-WIDER 2017).

Africa is far from homogeneous. There is considerable variation in how and the extent to which social assistance (and social protection more generally) has evolved in sub-Saharan Africa. South Africa has the highest effective ‘coverage’ (as measured by the ILO) at 48 per cent of the population (ILO 2017: Table B.3), with its system of social assistance costing close to 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). In stark contrast, other countries have small and less generous programmes targeted at the extremely poor. Few countries have coverage rates (as measured by the ILO) above 10 per cent, and expenditure on social assistance is often less than 0.5 per cent of GDP (ILO 2017). It is unlikely, however, that any country has no programme. Even in countries across the Sahel and Horn of Africa, with weak or failed states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and quasi-state institutions operate feeding and food or cash-for-work programmes (see Osofisan (2011)). According to one recent review (ODI 2016), 40 of the 48 countries now have at least one social assistance programme, a doubling since 2010.

The papers in the forthcoming special issue of *Development and Change* examine how and why social assistance programmes have expanded, at different paces and to different extents, across a set of East and Southern African countries. The case studies are based on research conducted as part of two research programmes based at the Universities of Cape Town and Manchester. Both the Cape Town-based programme on ‘Legislating and Implementing Welfare Policy Reforms’ (LIWPR) and the Manchester-based ‘Politics of Social Protection’ project, which is part of the broader Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) research centre, were funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID), the former jointly through the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council. The UNU-WIDER project on ‘The Economics and Politics of Taxation and Social Protection’ helped bring the two projects together, including through a symposium held in Mexico City in February 2016, and provided the impetus and resourcing for the forthcoming special issue.⁵

⁵ For more on these three research initiatives, see IDCPPA (n.d.) and UNU-WIDER (n.d.).

These initiatives shared a concern that sub-Saharan Africa remains largely ‘off the map’ of the growing global literature on social protection and welfare state-building, and that African cases do not fit well into existing global typologies or explanations. The vast majority of research on social protection in Africa, mostly commissioned by aid donors, has had an overwhelmingly technical focus, concerned with issues such as measuring the welfare impacts of particular programmes, examining how best to design targeting and delivery systems, and assessing the degree of fiscal space for policy reform. In contrast, the studies conducted for the ESID and LIWPR programmes, some of which are included in the forthcoming special issue, focused on the politics of policy reform (and non-reform). The research teams used process-tracing methods to identify the key drivers of government decisions either to reject proposed reforms or to adopt or expand social assistance programmes (George and Bennett 2004; Collier 2011). Documents from states and international organizations provided an important frame, but the most important sources were key informant interviews with the actors involved in negotiating social assistance in particular country contexts. The resulting case studies offer detailed first-hand accounts of how contested processes of policy reform played out over time in relation to wider political and political economy developments. The papers in the special issue focus on eight cases, with a ninth paper focusing on one of the major international organizations immersed in reforms in many of these cases.

The eight countries—Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia—vary in most general economic and political dimensions (see Table 1) as well as in the particulars of their social assistance systems (see Table A1 in the Appendix). While none are in West Africa, and all are broadly anglophone, they encompass much of the diversity of cases across sub-Saharan Africa. They include a country with high GDP per capita, very little official development assistance (ODA), little agricultural employment, and low absolute poverty (Botswana) as well as low-income countries with massive ODA, considerable agricultural employment, and high poverty rates (especially Malawi). Some of the countries have small populations (especially Botswana and Lesotho); one has a very large population (Ethiopia). Some (Botswana, Lesotho, Zambia, and Malawi) were credibly democratic as of 2015. Others remained far from democratic (Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda).

Table 1: Economic and political conditions in the country case studies

Country	GDP per capita (US\$, 2016)	Population (millions, 2016)	Poverty rate (% , year) ^{1/}	Agricultural work (% , 2016) ^{2/}	Net ODA as % of government expenditure ^{3/}	Quality of democracy (2016) ^{4/}
Botswana	6,924	2	18 (2009)	26	2	8
Ethiopia	707	102	34 (2010)	71	96	-2
Lesotho	1,040	2	60 (2010)	40	32	8
Malawi	300	18	71 (2010)	70	88	6
Rwanda	703	12	60 (2013)	75	76	-3
Tanzania	879	56	49 (2011)	67	27	3
Uganda	580	41	35 (2012)	72	47	-1
Zambia	1,270	17	58 (2015)	55	33	7

Note: ^{1/} Poverty rate measured as share of population with incomes below \$1.90 per person per day at 2011 prices, PPP. ^{2/} Employment in agriculture as % of total employment. ^{3/} net official development assistance received by countries as % of central government expenditure. ^{4/} Polity IV scale from -10 for fully authoritarian to +10 for fully democratic.

Source: Authors, based on World Development Indicators (World Bank 2017a) and the Polity IV database (Center for Systemic Peace 2016).

Our eight case studies also encompass much of the variation that exists across sub-Saharan Africa in terms of social assistance programmes. They include countries with widespread pension and other cash transfer programmes (Botswana, Lesotho), countries that have been slowly expanding pilot programmes (Malawi, Uganda, Zambia), and countries with a stronger emphasis on workfare (Ethiopia, Tanzania). The case studies do not include, however, the former settler states of South

Africa and Namibia, nor the Indian Ocean island-state of Mauritius. The welfare states of South Africa (and hence its former quasi-colony, Namibia) and Mauritius long predate those of other countries across sub-Saharan Africa (Seekings 2007, 2011; Ulriksen 2012). South African and Mauritian cash transfer programmes influenced the design of programmes elsewhere in Africa (directly, in the case of Mauritius and Zanzibar (Seekings 2016b) and more indirectly in the case of South Africa and its neighbours, as the case studies of Lesotho and Botswana below indicate). Nor does the forthcoming special issue consider the countries of North Africa.

While our focus is on the politics of whether and how social assistance programmes become adopted (and later expanded), this cannot be understood independently of the broader character of the economy and public policy, or what has been called the ‘distributional regime’ (Seekings and Natrass 2005). In countries across Africa, ‘who gets what’ depends on both the ‘market’ distribution and the pattern of redistribution effected (directly and indirectly) through public policy. Across most of sub-Saharan Africa, policy makers face choices not only between what interests to promote but also what policies to prioritize in so doing. Crucially, as we shall see below, even those policy makers committed to improving the welfare of the poor must choose how to allocate scarce resources between subsidizing aspects of peasant production (through, for example, fertilizer subsidies or free seed) and social assistance to poor households. In many countries, including (most clearly) Botswana and Ethiopia, current social assistance measures have their origins in ‘emergency’ drought relief. Protecting citizens against the risk of drought led to workfare and feeding programmes, and later other cash transfers. In these countries, social assistance expanded as the limits to agrarian strategies became clearer. In other cases, however, the agrarian option remains credible and politically appealing. In both Malawi and Zambia, for example, social assistance has been sidelined by governments’ preference for fertilizer subsidies. Social assistance has become important in Africa when and where the prior agrarian distributional regime has broken down.

2 The changing literature on welfare state-building and African cases

The global study of the drivers of social protection—or welfare state-building—has gone through at least four phases, applied primarily to the advanced capitalist economies of the global North (Hicks and Esping-Andersen 2005; Castles et al. 2010). Welfare state-building—measured in terms of state expenditure (or ‘commitment’)—was first viewed as driven by economic modernization, which drove political and demographic change (Wilensky 1975). From the 1980s this approach was superseded by one focusing on ‘power resources’, i.e. the distributional struggles between competing interest groups. This approach focused on the political power wielded by the major classes and the ensuing class conflicts and compromises characteristic of capitalist democracies (especially Korpi 1983; Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999; Huber and Stephens 2001). Esping-Andersen’s (1990) seminal contribution revolved around his insight that welfare regimes varied in form separately to their level of commitment. Scholars of the USA, especially, criticized this approach for its neglect of political institutions (e.g. Amenta et al. 2001). By the mid-2000s, a concern with the role of ideas and norms had expanded from historical case studies to a more general engagement with cross-national variation (e.g. Béland 2005; van Oorschot et al. 2008) and transnational diffusion (e.g. Obinger et al. 2013).

The more recent study of countries across the global South has been influenced most strongly by the power resources approach focused on the political economy. Haggard and Kaufman (2008) show in their comparative study of Latin America, East Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe that strong regional differences persist even when controlling, in regression models, for various measures of economic modernization or development. They explain inter-regional variation in

terms of differences in periods of ‘critical realignment’, i.e. of ‘the composition of the political elite and in the political and legal status of labor and peasant organizations and mass political parties’ (Haggard and Kaufman 2008: 45). Similar arguments have been made in more detail with respect to Latin America, in both comparative studies of this one region (Pribble 2011; Huber and Stephens 2012) and case studies of individual countries within it (e.g. Dion 2010), and East Asia (e.g. Yang 2017). More recently, a similar political economy approach has been used to explain variation between Indian states (e.g. Tillin et al. 2015).

The existing literature has little to say about Africa. Indeed, one early study emphasized the supposed absence of welfare states in Africa (Bevan 2004). Recent reviews have pointed to many of the key and distinctive features of African cases: an historically rooted emphasis on social assistance for a predominantly rural population rather than social insurance for formally employed public sector and industrial workers; the importance of rural and agrarian rather than urban and industrial risks, and of the challenges of deagrarianization; and the important role played by transnational actors in combination with domestic actors (Hickey 2008; Niño-Zarazúa et al. 2012; Lavers 2013; Seekings 2013, forthcoming; Lavers and Hickey 2016). Until now, however, there have been few detailed case studies of individual countries that allow for an analysis of either specific policy outcomes or overall variation within Africa. The case studies presented in the forthcoming special issue provide a rich and novel base for analysing variation within Africa as well as the overall distinctiveness of Africa in relation to other regions across the global South.

In explaining varied policy outcomes, the case studies conducted at ESID and LIWPR have employed slightly different approaches. The ESID studies have been influenced strongly by the literature on ‘political settlements’ in the global South, i.e. an approach with marked parallels with the ‘power resources’ and ‘power constellations’ approaches to explaining variation between welfare states in the global North (Lavers and Hickey 2016). The LIWPR studies have attached more importance to the political institutions—especially political parties and elections—that characterize much of Africa since (re)democratization in the 1990s. The two approaches reflect in part the selection of cases in each research programme. The ESID research covered three distinctly undemocratic or only weakly democratic countries (Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda) as well as two more competitive democracies (Zambia and Kenya).⁶ The LIWPR research also covered the minimally democratic case of Uganda, but focused primarily on more competitive democracies (including, in addition to Zambia, Ghana, and Kenya, the cases of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania (and Zanzibar), Lesotho, South Africa, and Mauritius). In practice, the two research programmes broadly converged, paying attention to both political economic and more specifically political factors, as well as to the role of ideas, even if they arrived there from somewhat different directions.

‘Political settlements’ can be defined as ‘a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible, and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability’ (Khan 2010: 4). The analytical focus of political settlement theory is on the power relations between political, economic, and social elites; between these elites and non-elite groups; and how this distribution of power both shapes and is shaped by the formal and informal institutions that distribute resources and political power. From this perspective, social protection is a resource whose distribution is subject to competition and negotiation and which is shaped by the survival strategies of political elites. The power resources literature in the global North focused on class struggles and coalition building in the context of relatively developed capitalist markets and functioning representative democracies. Countries across the global South, especially in Africa, tend to have much less

⁶ ESID has more recently conducted studies of social assistance in Ghana, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.

developed capitalist markets and weak or no democratic political institutions. The political settlements approach has thus considered other forms of political incorporation and mobilization, including along ethnic and regional lines or through patron–client relationships, and highlights the importance of informal as well as formal political institutions.

Studies by ESID have gone beyond Khan (2010), however, in emphasizing, first, that political settlements do not merely reflect the balance of power between competing interest groups but are also held together by common ideas that provide a shared understanding between the factions that are party to a political settlement (Lavers and Hickey 2016). These ideas can take many different forms such as nationalism, developmentalism, socialism, or opposition to communism (Hickey et al. 2015; Lavers forthcoming). As we found in our case study investigations, it is useful here to distinguish between three types of idea: *policy ideas* that provide potential solutions to pre-defined social problems; *problem definitions* that provide ways of framing particular social issues, favouring certain types of policy solution over others; and *paradigms* or political philosophies that serve as overarching road maps (Béland 2005: 8; Schmidt 2008). Second, in a context in which donors continue to finance a significant portion of central government expenditure, although with a significant variation across countries (see Figure 1), the domestic focus of political settlements theory must be complemented by an acknowledgement of the transnationalized nature of governance in contemporary Africa (Hagmann and Péclard 2011; Hickey et al. 2015). Foreign donors operate as a distinct faction (or factions) within political settlements whose power and influence do not simply follow from the importance of the resources they provide but, vitally, depend on the evolution of aid relations over years and the strategies African governments have derived to manage these donors (Whitfield 2009; Lavers and Hickey 2016). Third, the term ‘political settlement’ unfortunately and misleadingly implies that politics remains settled or static following a ‘settlement’. While political settlements imply a certain degree of institutional stability over the short to medium term, political settlements are inherently dynamic (Behuria et al. 2017), transformed not only through economic growth and financial or other shocks, but also as a result of political challenges posed by groups previously excluded from political power. The ensuing processes of change can be either slow and gradual or rapid and transformative.

There are a number of ways in which the political settlement may shape the evolution of social protection. The resources provided through social protection can be an important part of the distributive bargain that underpins stability of the political settlement itself. This was the case in the class compromise between capital and labour in both the global North and Latin America through most of the twentieth century. In South Africa also, relatively generous social transfers to a broad section of the population have become an integral part of the post-apartheid distributive bargain, compensating the mostly unskilled, unemployed, and poor population for an economic growth path that is capital- and skill-intensive (Seekings and Nattrass 2005, 2015). Even where social protection does not yet constitute a sufficiently large resource to be considered a central component of the political settlement itself, social protection policy-making is still likely to be shaped by the incentives generated by the political settlement. For example, where power is highly concentrated among a narrow ruling elite and there is little prospect of the ruling coalition losing power in the near future, policy-making in general, but including that on social protection, may be open to long time horizons. In contrast, where power is distributed more widely among elite groups and there is a high likelihood that the political elites currently in power will be replaced by others in the short to medium term (whether through elections or coups), time horizons will be much shorter and decision-making focused on retaining political power.

While the ESID researchers drew (critically) on political settlements theory, the LIWPR researchers focused more on the new political dynamics resulting from the shift from one-party and other authoritarian regimes to competitive multi-party democracies in the 1990s, and in a few cases—including Botswana—dating back to independence in the 1960s. In country after country

across Africa, over a single generation, one-party states, life presidents, and authoritarian regimes have given way to term limits, multi-party elections, and the ousting of presidents and parties through electoral defeat (Carbone 2013; Cheeseman 2015). In the eight countries studied in the forthcoming special issue, four have experienced turnovers in government following electoral defeat (thrice in Lesotho, twice in each of Zambia and Malawi, and once in Kenya). In a fifth case (Botswana), the incumbent party has won several elections by narrow margins (as is the case in Zanzibar, part of Tanzania). Even in Uganda, elections have prompted an authoritarian president to adopt popular reforms (e.g. Stasavage 2005).

Competitive elections shift the incentives facing political elites, who can choose to use social protection policy as a material or ideological resource to win or retain electoral support. Political elites may be unable to retain power solely through the distribution of rents within the elite, and instead must reach out to voters through promises to distribute resources (van de Walle 2007, 2014). In Africa, as in Latin America, there has been some ‘democratisation of clientelism’ (Gay 1998). Recent research suggests that democracy has been a key factor in the public health and education reforms (Carbone 2012; Kudamatsu 2012; Harding and Stasavage 2013; Carbone and Pellegata 2017). The LIWPR researchers sought to understand whether, how, and why democratization had shaped welfare policy-making and implementation.

The quality of democracy in contemporary Africa remains very uneven, however. Not only do incumbents often ensure that the ‘democratic’ playing field is not level, but political parties in sub-Saharan Africa tend to be vehicles for patronage politics rather than programmatic reform. Few parties have strong organization. Some have no clear ideological position. Many political parties have remained the highly personalized vehicles for the career advancement of individual politicians, rarely outliving the founder, while politics becomes a competition to build sufficiently broad ethnic or regional coalitions to secure electoral majorities (van de Walle 2014; Cheeseman 2015). Patronage and clientelism remain the dominant political practices in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa (see e.g. Cheeseman (2016) on Kenya). The flaws are evident even in the sample of eight countries examined in the forthcoming special issue, which cover the full range of possibilities along the democracy–authoritarian continuum (see Table 1) (Levitsky and Way 2010; Bogaards and Elischer 2016). For ESID researchers, the influence of democratization was examined in terms of whether it altered the dynamics of political settlements, in terms of relationships between elites competing for power and between ruling elites and citizens.

The uneven character of ‘democracy’ across much of Africa reflects in large part the broad political economic factors underpinning political settlement theory. In northwest Europe, social democratic parties drew their power from the mass political mobilization of the working class, often in alliance with small farmers. Across most of Africa, the working class remains small, and the formally employed working class even smaller. The small farmers who continue to dominate the electorate in many African countries are rarely politically mobilized and organized as a class. Nonetheless, their demands may provide important incentives for political elites to expand social protection as a way of rewarding core supporters or of branding candidates for election.

The case studies in the forthcoming special issue examine the interactions between different actors over policy reforms while locating these in a broader analysis of the underlying character of politics—i.e. the political settlement—in each country. The case studies examine how the efforts of transnational actors to promote particular forms of social assistance through a combination of ideational influence and financial leverage intersect with domestic political processes in particular national contexts. Here, the degree to which donor policy ideas fit with the incentives provided by particular political settlements and democratic competition are vital considerations. Likewise, the ability of social protection advocates to forge coherent coalitions of transnational actors, politicians, bureaucrats, and civil society representatives, and, vitally, how these relate to influential

figures within the political settlement have an important bearing on social protection policy-making.

3 Transnational actors and policy diffusion

Perhaps the most immediately striking aspect of the policy-making process in sub-Saharan Africa is the prominence of transnational actors (including UN agencies), international finance organizations (especially the World Bank), national aid donor agencies (such as the British Department for International Development, (DFID)) and international NGOs (such as HelpAge International). As previous studies have emphasized, transnational actors have been highly influential in policy reform across much of Africa (Devereux 2010; Cherrier 2014). All major international agencies involved in development have now adopted a commitment to social protection, and social protection is explicitly included in the Sustainable Development Goals, as Hickey and Seekings (2017) discuss.

These transnational actors have diverse approaches. The World Bank, for example, has promoted the Latin American model of ‘conditional’ cash transfers primarily for families with poor children into sub-Saharan Africa, together with workfare programmes (Peck and Theodore 2015). The ILO has promoted both the expansion of social insurance and social assistance. HelpAge International has promoted universal social pensions, while DFID has tended to promote means-tested but otherwise social assistance. The World Food Programme (WFP) has promoted workfare programmes as a substitute for direct feeding schemes.

Transnational actors have employed a wide array of tactics in their promotion of reform. Within Africa, as our case studies show, multiple agencies have invested heavily in policy advocacy, with DFID in particular ‘working politically’ to secure their objectives. They have typically invited political leaders and senior bureaucrats to seminars and on study tours; they commissioned and distributed research on the benefits, design, and costs of programmes, and provided technical assistance to government departments; they initiated (and subsequently monitored and evaluated) experimental or pilot programmes; and they often played a major role in drafting bold national statements about social protection policy. Donors have funded significant parts of or even entire programmes.

The embrace and advocacy of social assistance by transnational actors has not consistently led to a similar embrace on the part of national governments, however. Across much of Africa, governments have resisted the reforms endorsed and promoted by these transnational actors. While aid donors and international agencies are often perceived to have considerable power, our case studies suggest that their power has been tightly bounded, often limited to putting the idea of policy reforms on the agenda and falling short of ensuring that governments actually adopt and implement reforms. This ideational power is far from insignificant. It is not a coincidence that social assistance programmes have been introduced in most African countries during a particular historical period. But donors and agencies have often failed to persuade national governments either to extend (or ‘scale up’) experimental programmes across the whole country or to accept full financial responsibility for the programmes.

In the extreme case of Zambia, Pruce and Hickey (2016) show that pilot programmes operated for ten years before the national government began to expand them, despite the use of reformist discourse in planning documents. In Lesotho, Granvik (2016) argues that donors were important in the partial introduction of a child grant, but not in the earlier and more fulsome introduction of old age pensions. In Tanzania, Ulriksen (2016) shows that the government of Tanzania has

steadfastly resisted assuming any responsibility for World Bank-initiated cash transfer programmes. Seekings (2017a) also shows that international organizations played no part in the introduction of old age pensions in Botswana, and the government of Botswana subsequently resisted proposals that it introduced a general child or family grant. Meanwhile, Lavers (2016a) shows that the government of Ethiopia resisted donor pressure to reform the emergency relief system for years, only introducing the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) when domestic political crises forced a re-think in policy. These cases point to the fact that donor power is easily overestimated.

The bounded power of international organizations reflects in part the shifting financial position of most African countries. In the 1980s and 1990s, highly indebted African countries were susceptible to external pressure. Debt relief in the early 2000s reduced the power of international organizations. Some national governments remain heavily dependent on foreign aid, as Table 1 above shows. Overseas development aid to Ethiopia is valued at almost 100 per cent of central government expenditure. Malawi (at 88 per cent) and Rwanda (at 76 per cent) are not far behind. But many other countries—including low-income countries such as Tanzania and Zambia—are much less dependent, and middle-income countries such as Botswana receive very little aid. Unsurprisingly, international organizations exert very little influence in Botswana. Even in aid-dependent countries, however, ODA buys less influence over social assistance reforms than might be expected, as revealed in Lavers' (2016a, 2016b) papers on Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Almost no country in sub-Saharan Africa spends as much on social assistance as the major international organizations recommend. Both the ILO and World Bank have advocated the introduction of social assistance programmes costing several percentages of GDP, but almost no national governments have approved expenditures of more than 0.5 per cent of GDP, and most governments balk at even smaller expenditures (Seekings 2017b). This is partly due to the fact that governments in many low- and lower middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa lack the fiscal capacity to implement social protection systems to scale (Barrientos and Niño-Zarazúa 2011). The precarious level of institutionalization and financing that remains characteristic of most transfer programmes in the region (see Table A1 in the Appendix) reflect continuing economic fragility, partly due to the systemic effects from the Great Recession of the late 2000s and early 2010s, but also due to the structure of these economies (IMF 2017).⁷

The case studies in the forthcoming special issue argue that whether or not national governments introduce or expand social assistance programmes depends primarily on politics within each country. Bilateral donors and international organizations are certainly players on the national stage, but they have rarely acted as a united force (frequently on account of their divergent approaches and organizational dynamics) and individually have played subordinate roles. In Uganda, as Hickey and Bukenya (2016) show, the initial failure of transnational actors to persuade the government to introduce reforms was in part due to divisions between them; their subsequent success followed agreement that one organization (DFID) would take the lead. Similarly, in Ethiopia, as Lavers (2016a) has shown, a rare moment of coordination between donors during the 2003 food crisis forced the government to engage in the discussions that led to the PSNP, while the subsequent donor fragmentation over the design of the programme enabled the government to dictate key aspects of the design. Donor coordination around a shared agenda also helped give impetus to social assistance reforms adopted in Zambia, as the study by Pruce and Hickey (2016) indicates.

⁷ For a detailed discussion on the role of taxation and revenue mobilization in state building and economic development, see Addison et al. (2018) and the accompanied articles in the same issue.

Some of the international organizations have themselves recognized that successful reform requires that national states take ‘ownership’ of reforms and have made efforts to align their advocacy with political incentives and ideas (Hickey and Seekings 2017). If external actors overplay their hand, they undermine the likelihood of local ownership of the process. This is evident in the contrast between Tanzania and Zanzibar. In Tanzania, as Ulriksen (2016) shows, the World Bank has poured considerable resources into social assistance, funding the rollout of the Productive Social Safety Net through the Tanzania Social Action Fund. The national government has declined to pay for any programmes itself. In Zanzibar—a largely autonomous territory within Tanzania—the idea of a universal pension was also placed on the agenda and then promoted for five years by external actors, especially HelpAge International. The reform was effected only when the Zanzibari state saw it as their initiative with external actors providing assistance (Seekings 2016b).

International organizations have often been most effective when they have facilitated policy transfer (and adaptation) from one country to another. Ethiopia’s PSNP provided an important inspiration for Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme as Lavers (2016b) has shown. However, the attraction of Ethiopia’s PSNP was in part because these other countries shared, to varying degrees, the Ethiopian government’s developmental vision and paradigmatic worldview, including the importance of self-reliance. Meanwhile, global and even regional initiatives and ‘agreements’ on social protection have had little direct influence on national-level policy-making. African governments were party to the UN-wide Social Protection Floors Initiative and the ILO’s Recommendation 202 on national Social Protection Floors. The African Union adopted a Social Policy Framework in 2008. The process-tracing conducted for the case studies failed to uncover evidence that these external agreements did more than legitimate—to some extent—the possibility of social protection. The experience of international organizations in sub-Saharan Africa points to the limits to their power and influence. When they do influence national policy-making, their preferred approach is more often translated rather than simply applied or replicated.

4 State and society

While transnational actors have, undoubtedly, exercised some influence on the expansion of social assistance within sub-Saharan Africa, the case studies in the forthcoming special issue emphasize that the timing of scheme adoption, the types of programmes that are adopted or rejected, and the degree of programme expansion are all fundamentally driven by domestic political dynamics. Cases as diverse as Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda all highlight how donor pressure for policy reform and the expansion of social assistance has been resisted over extended periods, only resulting in programme adoption and expansion when domestic political factors shift or where donors realign their advocacy efforts to fit with dominant ideas and incentives within national-level politics. Here we focus on how these political dynamics, particularly in terms of political settlements, ideas, and electoral politics, have shaped the adoption and expansion of cash transfer programmes in our eight case study countries.

4.1 Social assistance and the politics of elite survival in Africa

In stark contrast to research on the politics of welfare states and social protection in Latin America, and also in the South Asian context, the case studies in the forthcoming special issue suggest that popular political mobilization has played a minimal role in the expansion of social assistance in the sub-Saharan African countries examined. Instead, the driving force for reform has been where social assistance is incorporated as an element of the political survival strategies employed by domestic political elites to build regime legitimacy, secure political allegiance, or win over electoral support. These survival strategies differ according to both the nature of the political settlement

within each country, with reference to the balance of power relations among elites and between elites and subjects, and the dynamics that flow from these shifting power relations. Of the case studies that employ the political settlements framework, a clear divergence exists between those countries where political power is concentrated among a handful of political elites within a dominant ruling party (Ethiopia and Rwanda) and those in which power is more dispersed among elite groups (Uganda and Zambia). In the former, electoral politics are, for the most part, a mere façade, offering little to no possibility of regime change. In contrast, in the latter some degree of dispersal of political power in Uganda and Zambia requires that politicians prioritize building broad political coalitions through alliances and the distribution of rents in order to win meaningfully competitive elections.

There are strong similarities between the Ethiopia and Rwanda cases in terms of how this basic political settlement translates into commitment to particular forms of social assistance. In each case, the ruling elite secured political power through military means, and this narrow elite is commonly associated with a minority ethnic group, which would stand little chance of maintaining power through the distribution of rents and coalition-building strategies common in Uganda and Zambia. Instead, both regimes have adopted a developmental orientation as foundational element of their political settlements, seeking to build regime legitimacy through the delivery of rapid and broad-based socioeconomic development, alongside the suppression of political voice outside the ruling party. These clear developmental visions initially excluded social assistance—quite explicitly in the case of Ethiopia (Lavers 2016a)—while prioritizing ideas of self-reliance and the importance of maximizing resources for broad-based economic development. It was only in the context of perceived threats to the political settlement—including a major food crisis in 2002/03 following a series of ‘Armageddons’ facing the leadership in Ethiopia and rising inequality that threatened to undermine the post-ethnic national building strategy in Rwanda—that social assistance schemes have been integrated into existing development strategies as a means of enhancing regime legitimacy and neutralizing potential political threats (see Lavers (2016b) on Rwanda). In doing so, very particular forms of social assistance have been adopted and rapidly rolled out, with a strong focus on productive programme designs through an emphasis on the development of community infrastructure through labour-intensive public works and links between receipt of transfers and credit and livelihoods schemes to promote self-reliance and graduation.

A very different process unfolded in Uganda and Zambia, as shown by Hickey and Bukenya (2016) and Pruce and Hickey (2016). While ruling parties in these countries periodically express a desire to pursue developmental or social democratic agendas, these are inconsistently applied in practice, not least as a result of the necessity of elite coalition building and rent distribution that undermines developmental impulses. As such, ruling party ideology has provided little in the way of support for the expansion of social assistance, while concerns about the dangers of welfare dependency resulted in significant opposition, particularly from finance ministries in both cases. Rather, the original strategy for social assistance in Uganda and Zambia came from donors who lobbied extensively to secure approval for pilot cash transfer schemes. These pilots were then the focus of further advocacy efforts focused on building the evidence base for programme efficacy (particularly in Zambia) and organizing visits for influential politicians and bureaucrats to demonstrate the programmes in action. However, the moderate levels of political support that have ultimately been secured in each case only materialized as a result of domestic political shifts and attempts by donors to align their advocacy efforts with the interests and ideas of ruling elites (see also Grebe and Mubiru (2014) and Grebe (2014) on Uganda; and Kabandula and Seekings (2016) and Siachiwena (2016) on Zambia).

However, it is not just the type of political settlement that matters, but the way in which the shifting nature of power relations that underpin them can generate perceived threats to the legitimacy and stability of the ruling coalition. The willingness and urgency of elites to extend social assistance

can be linked directly to the level of threat that they perceived themselves to be under. The response has been weakest where the political threat to ruling elites was weak, as in Zambia and Uganda, and highest where the threat was perceived to be high (Ethiopia and Rwanda). During the mid-2000s when donors started to promote social assistance in Uganda and Zambia, the respective political elites did not face a significant crisis that threatened their legitimacy or hold on power. The main motivation for political elites in these contexts was to secure local level political support in the context of certain lower-level shifts within the political settlement, rather than cope with threats to the deal itself. For example, in Zambia, the direct trigger for increasing expenditure on social assistance was a crisis in the agricultural subsidy system which had constituted the primary mode of rent distribution used by elites to maintain legitimacy and political support in rural areas (see Mason et al. (2013)).

In contrast, the strongest cases of elite commitment to social assistance derive from perceived threats—even existential threats—to the political settlement to which social assistance is seen as a potential solution. Here, elites have been motivated by broad concerns about political legitimacy, as well as mitigating specific threats to the ruling coalition that originate in distributional crises.⁸ In addition to the ‘Armageddons’ that political elites in Ethiopia perceived themselves to be threatened by, Rwanda’s ruling elite was catalysed by the failure to translate economic growth into a reduction of poverty or inequality, thereby threatening the coalition’s claims to promote inclusive development and build a post-ethnic society. The case of Botswana suggests that these findings hold across time. The paper by Seekings (2017a) shows how the prolonged drought that the country experienced in the 1960s helped instigate a response that would set in place a process of building the welfare regime apparent today. This crisis coincided with a critical political moment within the process of state formation in Botswana, with the new ruling coalition keen to establish its developmentalist and nation-building credentials, in part to assuage concerns that a certain element of the Tswana elite would seek to govern in sectional rather than national interests. In Botswana, as in South Africa, the welfare state became a major pillar of the legitimacy not only of democratically elected government but of the democratic institutions themselves.

The cases studies of Lesotho (Granvik 2016) and Tanzania (Ulriksen 2016) also incorporate aspects of the adapted political settlements framework to explain the social assistance policy process. In both cases, dominant party settings provided sufficient stability and long-term horizons to enable coherent decision-making on social assistance. In Tanzania, in a dominant party setting the adoption of a clear productivist developmental vision and an emphasis on self-reliance has favoured productivist forms of social assistance, requiring labour supply from households and other conditions, rather than pure income transfers. Meanwhile in Lesotho, the transition from an extended period of highly unstable competitive politics to a more stable dominant party system following reform to the electoral system provided the ruling elite with an opportunity to introduce a social pension.

4.2 Electoral politics

If political settlements underpin enduring patterns to politics, elections provide opportunities for change. The case studies in the forthcoming special issue provide a rather mixed picture regarding the influence of electoral competition (and multi-party politics more broadly) on policy reform. There are certainly examples in which the general trend from dominant leaders and parties to increasingly competitive, multi-party elections during the 1990s and 2000s has spurred campaign promises to expand the reach and generosity of social assistance. In some cases, candidates have

⁸ In line with past research that highlighted the importance of crises in the adoption of pro-poor policies (Hickey 2009).

sought to brand or distinguish themselves in terms of social protection. More often, social assistance has been a valence issue, with competing political parties outlining similar views, whether in favour of or sceptical towards social protection. In Botswana, Seekings (2017a) has shown that the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had long branded itself as the party of drought relief. Faced with stronger challenges from urban-based opposition parties that themselves advocated increased expanded public provision, the BDP moved to introduce old age pensions and to expand its feeding and workfare programmes. Likewise, in Lesotho, Granvik (2016) argues that the social pension was introduced in a period of political dominance and stability, although the pension payment rates subsequently became a focus for competition between political parties promising voters ever higher rates. In Zambia, Hickey and Pruce (2016) show that the expansion of the social cash transfer programme followed the change of government in 2011, although this has not been an issue in the election itself. Furthermore, in Uganda, Hickey and Bukenya (2016) show that the addition of a fifteenth district in the original pilot was linked to the ruling party's political strategy for building support in the opposition-leaning north of the country, while the subsequent roll out of the scheme was intended to provide visible state transfers in the lead-up to presidential elections in 2016. The case of Malawi, however, provides a somewhat cautionary tale regarding the potential of social protection as an electoral strategy. Hamer and Seekings (2017) argue that in a context in which competing candidates had already staked out the pro-growth and pro-peasant political brands, President Banda resorted to a pro-poor and pro-women social assistance brand as part of her electoral strategy. Though her resounding defeat had multiple causes, the results suggest limits to the political appeal of social assistance.

The other case studies do not identify electoral politics as a major driver of social assistance. In Tanzania, the adoption of a new social pension was announced prior to the 2015 elections, but, as Ulriksen (2016) argues, this has not been matched with budgetary allocations and it is unclear whether there is any real commitment to meeting those electoral promises. Finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, there is little evidence that electoral competition had any real effect on the adoption of social assistance programmes in the highly dominant party regimes in Ethiopia and Rwanda. Despite common claims in the literature regarding the influence of the 2005 elections on the adoption of the PSNP earlier that year, Lavers (2016a) shows that the drivers of the programme lay in earlier political crises and revision of the government's development strategy. The political protests and violence following the highly contested 2005 elections in Ethiopia did, however, influence the recent adoption of the Urban PSNP. Here localized electoral losses in urban areas, as well as the large-scale opposition protests held in 2005 provided a spur for a renewed political strategy that combined both repression and closing of political space, alongside more populist initiatives to win back support including food subsidies, employment schemes, and, latterly, the PSNP.

4.3 The role of ideas

Variation between countries, and between governments in a country, also reflect ideological differences. Governments and other actors make choices when they are aware of alternative models or possibilities, and in light of their ideologies and beliefs as well as their calculation of interests. While political elites across much of Africa are generally resistant to the idea of 'handouts', they often also recognize collective responsibilities for certain categories of deserving poor, including even working-age adults and their dependents in times of drought. Within what might be considered a general conservative liberalism there are important variations. In Botswana, for instance, the political leaders—beginning with the founding President Seretse Khama and continuing under his successors from the BDP—developed a benignly conservative welfare doctrine that justified public support along conservative lines (Seekings 2016a). A similarly conservative view of welfare and deservingness seems to hold in Uganda, also, where donors' initial advocacy efforts were unsuccessful until they were re-framed within a politically acceptable

discourse regarding the need to preserve the dignity of vulnerable and deserving groups such as the elderly, rather than ‘the poor’ in general (see Hickey and Bukenya (2016)). Conservatism also seems to have underpinned the widespread anxiety over ‘dependency’, i.e. citizens (especially poor citizens) becoming dependent on government ‘handouts’ undermining their self-reliance and work ethic (see Seekings (2017c)). Political leaders seem to embrace policy reform when incentives (rooted in political crisis or competition) combine with a sense of responsibility to overshadow any anxiety over dependency.

More radical views have been articulated, including by the social democratic political elite in Mauritius, urban-based parties, trade unions, and other civil society organizations in Botswana and South Africa, and Bishop Kameeta in Namibia. Outside of Mauritius and South Africa, however, such views have rarely influenced policy-making.

Paradigmatic ideas regarding the importance of rapid and relatively inclusive socioeconomic development have been strong influences on social assistance policy in Ethiopia and Rwanda. In each case, regimes associated with minority ethnic groups have sought to build regime legitimacy and promote political stability through rapid development, requiring all policy, including social assistance, to contribute to these productive objectives. Despite the strong Marxist–Leninist roots in Ethiopia, in both countries the resulting approach to social protection is in stark opposition to social democratic ideas, with a strong resistance to perceived western-style welfare dependency (Lavers 2016a). In Ethiopia, at least, developmentalism has also been specifically framed in opposition to a caricatured neoliberalism. Nonetheless, government ideas on social protection in Ethiopia and Rwanda have actually resonated most strongly with the neoliberal, or what has more generously been described as ‘inclusive liberalism’, views of the post-Washington Consensus World Bank at points. The resulting social assistance programmes have been narrowly targeted on the poorest and most food insecure, with a strong emphasis on work requirements for anyone receiving support, and links to livelihood programmes aimed at making recipients productive and thereby enabling them to graduate from support.

Efforts to frame social assistance as a policy solution to a particular set of social problems were also influential at times, although only extensively so where they also fitted well with the types of paradigmatic ideas discussed above (Schmidt 2010). For example, new evidence that the rate of poverty reduction was declining helped convince some bureaucrats and politicians in countries like Rwanda and Zambia that new policy solutions were required. In Zambia, bureaucrats who had been co-opted into transnational policy coalitions in support of social assistance were able to point to evaluation evidence from randomized control trials that revealed the social cash transfer scheme to be more effective and efficient than other government interventions (Pruce and Hickey 2016).

Our work on these normative and ideological dimensions of public policy help to fill a conspicuous gap in the existing literatures on African politics, namely the politics that animates negotiations between elites and state-citizens, and between politicians and bureaucrats, which is informed by the ideas as well as the material incentives of the actors involved. In showing how the ideas and discursive strategies of key players within politics and international development can help explain the ‘politics of change’ around social assistance in Africa, we reflect the growing sense that political elite behaviour is not shaped solely by material self-interest (Hall 1993; Blyth 2002; Schmidt 2010). This is consistent with the constructivist turn in political studies (Hay 2011: 65–82), and Hagmann and Péclard’s (2011) insistence that the negotiation of statehood in Africa involves a significant discursive element.

5 Conclusion

The process through which social assistance has been promoted, contested, and rolled out thus closely reflects the *negotiated* character of statehood in sub-Saharan Africa (Hagmann and Péclard 2011), both in terms of the heavily transnationalized nature of governance, which continues to offer an influential role for external actors and ideas, and also the terms of the bargain between rulers and ruled, whereby concerns with electoral success, legitimacy, and popular pressures are increasingly influential over budgetary allocations and welfare provision. Our evidence suggests that political agency in the region has played a powerful role in this process, with the countries that reveal the highest levels of commitment to social assistance driven more by domestic political imperatives, and in some cases ‘neighbourhood’ effects, than by external pressure. Importantly, this process has been strongly informed not only by global imperatives and elite-level machinations but also by the particular historical character of welfare regimes in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in terms of long-standing ideas around deservingness and the role of the state, and the related effort to manage ongoing processes of deagrarianization.

It is worth pointing out some tensions arising between different elements in our analysis. On the one hand, and contrary to the Latin American experience, we find evidence that dominant and authoritarian regimes can be equally, and even more, committed to and capable of delivering social assistance than their more democratic counterparts. On the other hand, we also find that multi-party elections—and other aspects of democracy, including the media—can also play a positive role in driving up a focus on social assistance. This could lead us to re-open long-standing debates regarding the relative strengths and weaknesses of democratic as opposed to authoritarian regimes. However, we would argue that such debates tend to shed more heat than light (Kelsall 2014). What matters is the specific nature of state–society relationships in different contexts, how these are being reconfigured in different ways, and what this means for elite power, citizenship, and broader issues of legitimate and accountable rule. Contrasting democracy with authoritarianism is also unhelpful when it comes to discussing the strategic implications of the findings discussed here in practical terms. It is of little use to tell politicians and civil servants in Zambia and Ghana that Rwanda and Ethiopia are doing better than they are at delivering social assistance because they have dominant political settlements.

Understanding social assistance as forming part of the processes through which negotiated processes of statehood are currently taking place in sub-Saharan Africa offers a good deal of analytical power and helps reveal the possibility that social assistance may more readily form part of the politics of patronage in sub-Saharan Africa than a politics of ‘rightful claims’ (see Ferguson (2015), initially at least. This is not to deny that democratization can have a positive effect on extending social assistance; indeed, some of our cases are broadly consistent with van de Walle’s (2014: 231) claim that democratization is likely to provide incentives to make clientelism more redistributive by extending services and benefits to larger sections of the population. Social assistance within sub-Saharan Africa, then, is both flowing from and helping to embed very different political forms, not all of which are well aligned with contemporary hopes for a new politics of citizenship and social contracts on the continent.

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Appendix

Table A1: Coverage of social assistance in sub-Saharan Africa

Country	Programme	Type of programme ^{1/}	Level of Institutionalization ^{2/}	Start year	Coverage (direct and indirect beneficiaries)				Agencies involved
					2015	2010	2005	2000	
Angola	Cartão Kikua	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2013	250,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Commerce
Botswana	Old Age Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1996	493,570	450,000	400,000	350,000	Department of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Botswana	Ipelegeng—Public Works	Income transfers + community assets	Institutionalized	2008	55,000	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Department of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Botswana	Destitute Persons' Allowance	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2003	33,730	30,518	n.a.	n.e.	Department of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Botswana	National Orphan Care Programme	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1999	175,380	n.a.	52,537	n.a.	Department of Social Protection, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and UNICEF
Burkina Faso	Orphans and Vulnerable Children	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2008	16,250	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Plan International, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and UNICEF
Cameroon	Cameroon Social Safety Nets Project	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2014	200,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Cameroon, with support from International Development Association and the World Bank
Cape Verde	Pensão de Solidariedade Social	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2006	105,000	100,000	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Youth, Employment and Human Resources Development of Cape Verde and the National Centre of Social Pensions

Congo, Republic of	LISUNGI Safety Nets Project	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2014	18,704	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Social Affairs, World Bank, French Development Agency, UNICEF
Djibouti	Programme National de Solidarité Famille	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2015	32,685	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	State Secretariat for National Solidarity
Djibouti	Social Safety Net Program	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2010	7,500	7,500	n.e.	n.e.	Djibouti Social Development Agency and the World Bank
Ethiopia	Meket Livelihoods Development Project	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2003	46,600	45,000	n.a.	n.e.	Government of Ethiopia
Ethiopia	Productive Safety Net Program	Income transfers + community assets	Institutionalized	2005	7,640,000	7,000,000	5,000,000	n.e.	Government of Ethiopia with financial support of a consortium of donors (Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), DFID, European Commission, USAID and the World Bank)
Gambia	Family Strengthening Programme	Income transfers + human capital investment	Precarious institutionalization	2011	650	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Department of Social Welfare
Ghana	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme	Income transfers + human capital investment	Precarious institutionalization	2008	725,000	177,500	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare with financial support of a consortium of donor (UNICEF, DFID and the World Bank)
Guinea	Productive Social Safety Net Program—Pilot Cash Transfer Program	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2012	200,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Guinea and the World Bank

Guinea	Cash Transfer for Health, Nutrition and Education	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2013	10,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Guinea and the World Bank
Guinea-Bissau	Protecção Social	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2013	2,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Instituto Nacional de Seguranca Social
Ivory Coast	Temporary Employment Opportunities for Youth	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2011	12,693	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Ivory Coast, French Government and the World Bank
Kenya	Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2004	1,300,000	400,000	n.a.	n.e.	Ministry of Home Affairs Children's Department, DFID, UNICEF, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
Kenya	Older Persons Cash Transfer	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2006	295,000	165,000	n.e.	n.e.	The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development with financial support of a consortium of donors (the World Bank, DFID, UNICEF, WFP, OXFAM and Help Age International)
Kenya	The Hunger Safety Net Programme	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2009	400,000	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry for the Development of Northern Kenya, DFID and Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade
Kenya	Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer Programme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2012	45,505	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development with financial support of a consortium of donors (the World Bank, DFID, UNICEF, WFP)
Lesotho	Lesotho Old Age Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2004	425,435	415,000	345,230	n.e.	Department of Pensions, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
Lesotho	Child Grants Programme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2007	122,500	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Social Development with financial support from the European Commission

Liberia	Social Cash Transfer Program	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2009	10,000	9,500	n.e.	n.e.	National Social Cash Transfer Secretariat, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, and the National Social Protection Steering Committee, with support from UNICEF and European Commission
Madagascar	Le Transfert Monétaire Conditionnel	Income transfers + human capital investment	Precarious institutionalization	2014	1,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of National Education, National Office of Nutrition and Ministry of Public Health
Malawi	Social Cash Transfer Program	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2006	1,522,670	400,000	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Malawi, UNICEF, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Irish Aid, the European Union, and World Bank
Malawi	Zomba Cash Transfer Program	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2008	4,000	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	World Bank
Malawi	Improved Livelihoods Through Public Works	Income transfers + community assets	Precarious institutionalization	1995	434,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Government of Malawi, World Bank
Malawi	The Irrigation, Rural Livelihoods and Development Project		Pilot	2005	677,502	n.a.	n.a.	n.e.	World Bank
Malawi	LDF/MASAF/WB Public Works programme		Pilot	2005	521,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.e.	Local Development Fund, Malawi Social Action Fund and World Bank
Malawi	Rural Infrastructure Development Programme		Pilot	2012	26,201	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	European Union
Malawi	Food-for-Assets programme		Pilot	2008	85,000	53,260	n.e.	n.e.	WFP

Mali	Bourses Maman	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2002	2,500	2,500	n.a.	n.e.	Government of Mali and UNICEF
Mali	Jigisemejiri—Tree of Hope	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2013	218,025	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Mali and World Bank
Mauritius	Old Age Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1958	737,948	447,540	483,208	447,540	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions/Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Mauritius	Basic Widows' Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1950	20,302	21,815	22,672	21,323	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions
Mauritius	Basic Invalids' Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1950	30,715	27,679	25,646	19,958	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions
Mauritius	Basic Orphans' Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1950	400	369	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions
Mauritius	Child Allowance	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1960	16,311	18,556	18,367	n.a.	Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions
Mozambique	Programa Subsídio Social Básico	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	1997	359,859	217,000	69,095	n.a.	Government of Mozambique, DFID, Government of the Netherlands, UNICEF, ILO, IMF, the World Bank, European Union, Irish AID, SIDA, WFP, and USAID
Mozambique	Programa De Acção Social Produtiva		Precarious institutionalization	2012	288,267	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Mozambique and the World Bank
Namibia	Old Age Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1949	750,000	754,275	n.a.	483,800	Ministry of Health and Social Services

Namibia	Disability Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1995	26,346	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Namibia	Child Maintenance Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1977	117,663	86,086	34,707	20,000	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
Namibia	Foster Parent	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1960	17,825	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
Namibia	Special Maintenance Grant and Safety Allowance	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1960	114,512	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
Niger	Cash Transfers for Food Security and Cash for Work	Income transfers + community assets	Pilot	2011	85,988	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Niger; World Bank, UNICEF
Nigeria	In Care of the Poor	Income transfers + human capital investment	Precarious institutionalization	2007	110,000	93,750	n.e.	n.e.	National Poverty Eradication Programme and Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President
Nigeria	Ekiti State Social Security Scheme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2011	20,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ekiti state government
Nigeria	Osun Elderly Persons Scheme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2012	8,460	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Osun state local government
Rwanda	Vision 2020 Umerenge Programme	Income transfers + community assets	Institutionalized	2008	643,193	27,200	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Local Government
Rwanda	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Programme	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1997	36,000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Rwanda Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
Rwanda	Genocide Survivors Support and Assistance Fund	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1998	21,039	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Local Government

Sao Tome and Principe	Maes Carenciadas	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2014	30,600	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Sao Tome and Principe/UNICEF
Sao Tome and Principe	Bolsa Escola	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2015	2,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal	Rapid response Child-focused social transfer	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2009	710,000	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Cellule de Lutte Contre la Malnutrition, Government of Senegal
Senegal	Programme National de Bourses de Sécurité Familiale	Income transfers + human capital investment	Precarious institutionalization	2013	1,000,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Senegal
Senegal	Conditional Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2008	5,000	5,000	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Education and National Committee against AIDS with support from USAID, World Bank, UNICEF
Seychelles	Old Age Pension	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1979	45,205	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Seychelles Pension Fund
Sierra Leone	Unconditional Cash Transfer for the Old and Needy/Social Safety Net program	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2007	13,547	16,000	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Employment and Social Security and Ministry of Health
Sierra Leone	Cash for Work	Income transfers + community assets	Precarious institutionalization	2010	45,993	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the World Bank and National Commission for Social Action
South Africa	Older Persons' Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1928	15,761,310	13,118,595	10,720,585	9,387,690	South Africa's Social Security Agency
South Africa	Child Support Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1998	11,953,974	10,047,986	5,661,500	974,724	South Africa's Social Security Agency
South Africa	Care Dependency Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2004	140,645	110,304	88,889	n.e.	South Africa's Social Security Agency

South Africa	Foster Child Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2004	539,791	479,283	252,106	n.e.	South Africa's Social Security Agency
South Africa	Expanded Public Works Programme	Income transfers + community assets	Institutionalized	2004	1,240,000	210,000	1,700	n.e.	Department of Public Works
South Africa	Disability Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1946	1,098,018	1,224,294	1,307,551	608,761	South Africa's Social Security Agency
South Africa	Grant-in-Aid	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2004	119,541	n.a.	n.a.	n.e.	South Africa's Social Security Agency
South Sudan	Capacity Building Institutional and Human Resource Development Project	Income transfers + community assets	Precarious institutionalization	2007	2,000	2,000	n.e.	n.e.	Government of South Sudan
Swaziland	Old Age Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	2005	325,000	300,000	140,000	n.e.	Department of Social Welfare
Swaziland	Public Assistance Grant	Pure income transfer	Institutionalized	1985	5,075	5,000	n.a.	n.a.	Department of Social Welfare
Tanzania	Tanzania Community Based Conditional Cash Transfer	Income transfers + human capital investment	Pilot	2008	13,000	6,000	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Tanzania; International Development Association, DFID, USAID, UNICEF, and WFP
Tanzania	Tanzania Social Action Fund/ Productive Social Safety Net Programme	Income transfers + community assets	Precarious institutionalization	2000	6,000,000	5,000	n.a.	n.a.	Government of Tanzania, IDA, DFID, SIDA, USAID, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO and UNFPA
Togo	Cash Transfer Programme for Vulnerable Children in Northern Togo	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2013	14,828	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Togo, World Bank, UNICEF
Togo	Travaux à Haute Intensité de Main d'Oeuvre	Public Works	Pilot	2012	12,590	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Community Development, World Bank

Uganda	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2007	105,836	45,000	n.e.		Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, DFID, Irish AID, UNICEF
Uganda	Direct Income Support under the Expanding Social Protection Programme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2010	123,153	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, DFID, Irish AID, UNICEF
Uganda	Second Northern Uganda Social Action Fund Project (NUSAF 2)	Income transfers + community assets	Precarious institutionalization	2009	77,000	n.a.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Uganda, World Bank and DFID
Zambia	Child Grant Program	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2010	20,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health
Zambia	Social Pension	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	2014	300,000	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health
Zambia	Public Welfare Assistance Scheme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	1950	25,859	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, World Vision and Germany's Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Zambia	Social Cash Transfer Programme	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2004	900,000	20,000	5,900	n.e.	Government of Zambia, UNICEF, DFID, Irish Aid, Government of Finland, SIDA, WFP, ILO
Zimbabwe	Public Assistance Monthly Maintenance Allowance Programme	Pure income transfer	Precarious institutionalization	1998	33,440	29,719	25,997	20,562	Department of Social Services
Zimbabwe	Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Programme	Pure income transfer	Pilot	2011	236,013	n.e.	n.e.	n.e.	Government of Zimbabwe, UNICEF

Total coverage in sub-Saharan Africa					60,419,346	36,574,229	24,655,690	12,334,358	
Coverage as % of regional poverty headcount index ^{3/}					14.6%	9.1%	6.4%	3.2%	

Notes: ^{1/} We follow Niño-Zarazúa et al. (2012) and Barrientos and Niño-Zarazúa (2010) and adopt a typology that distinguishes social assistance programmes by objectives and core design features: first, *pure income transfers* such as old age pensions and family allowances are designed to smooth consumption and protect vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly and people with disabilities, from extreme deprivation. Second, *income transfers + community assets* provide income support to households with members of working age in exchange of labour supply and take a 'productivist' approach in their design to mitigate idiosyncratic risks and the effect of variations in economic conditions. Finally, *income transfers + human capital investment* are programmes that provide income support to households in poverty as well as preferential access to, and incentives for the utilization of, health or education services. These programmes adopt a 'human development' approach with the explicit objective of reducing present and future poverty. ^{2/} 'Institutionalized' indicates a leading role of central governments in the implementation and coordination of programmes. In such cases, programmes usually have national coverage, and are well-integrated into legislation and the governments' budgets, even when supported by donors. 'Precarious institutionalization' reflects the leading role of central governments in programme implementation, although financial and administrative considerations remain major challenges. 'Pilot' indicates a leading role of donors in the implementation of programmes and therefore their future institutionalization remains uncertain. ^{3/} Estimates from the World Bank (2017), based on population and poverty rates measured by the share of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day at 2011 purchasing power parity. 'n.e.' stands for non-existent by the reference year. 'n.a.' stands for no available data.

Source: Authors, based on the Social Assistance, Politics and Institutions (SAPI) database, Beta Version (UNU-WIDER 2017).