Beyond the Social Protection Paradigm: Social Policy in Africa's Development

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International Conference:
"Social Protection for Social Justice"
Institute of Development Studies, UK
13–15 April 2011

IDS Institute of Development Studies

Centre for Social Protection

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Abstract:

The experience of Sub-Saharan Africa with social development in the period between 1981 and 2005 has been grim, indeed. Over the period, policy focus has turned from a wider vision of social policy to narrow social protection concerns. This is what we refer to as the Social Protection Paradigm (SPP). We offer an assessment of the paradigm. In its place, we offer an alternative vision encapsulated in the idea of Transformative Social Policy, stressing the multiple roles of social policy and its wider vision of society. Social policy, in the context of meeting Africa's development challenges, must embrace these multiple roles, framed by the norms of equality and social solidarity.

Keywords: Transformative Social Policy, Social Protection, Africa, Social Solidarity, Cash Transfer.

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1. Introduction

Since the late 1980s, policy attention has focused on social protection instruments to mitigate the impact of adjustment: the so-called "social dimensions of adjustment" issues. In recent years, the focus has turned to cash transfer (conditional and non-conditional) as policy instrument of choice for addressing poverty and "vulnerability". The Conditional Cash Transfer scheme, for instance, has been celebrated as being "as close as one can come to a magic bullet in development" (Birdsall, 2004). With the objective, *inter alia*, to "correct for market failures associated with non-internalised positive externalities", conditional cash transfer programmes have sought "to create incentives for individuals to adjust their behaviour towards matching the social optimum" (Janvry and Sadoulet, 2004). Cash transfers generally have been enthused across the "donor" community as the policy instrument of choice: they are market-compliant, efficient in resource allocation and targeting, and suited to budget support programmes (see Dani, 2008; Holmqvist, 2009).

Much of this is linked to the idea that such a policy option offers a more efficient use of, and a measurable impact of, budget-support instruments. In parallel with this, there has been the effort among international non-governmental and multilateral organisations to call for internal fiscal instruments to raise the funds for such social protection mechanisms. The argument that between 0.5% and 2.7% of national GDP would be enough to fund such cash transfers, focused on old persons, and would seem to suggest that the absence of such instruments as child support grants, family cash transfers or old age pension schemes is largely due to a lack of political will. These ideas of social protection involve a retreat into a narrow vision of social policy.

The "social protection agenda" as Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2007:1) note, "comes with a fresh array of conceptual frameworks, analytical tools, empirical evidence, national policy processes, heavyweight agencies and big names in development studies aligned behind it". Much of this, we will show, is due to aggressive policy-merchandising. The near-hegemonic position of social protection as the preferred policy instrument of choice is such that to argue against it must be either an act of madness or worse.

Underlying the "Social Protection Paradigm" is a set of problematic assumptions, norms, and policy practices. First, is the problematic nature of policy transfers and learning. Second, is the disconnection of social and economic policy, the almost universal focus on chronic poverty (the "ultra-poor") and vulnerability, and a preference for means-testing and targeting. Third, is the normative underpinning of the social protection paradigm which is wedded to the neoliberal market transactional logic. The economic paradigm is largely unchallenged and its role in explaining the vulnerability, which the social protection practitioners seek to mitigate, remains, for the most part, un-investigated. The result is the diminution of the vision of social policy.

The alternative model for meeting the challenge of inclusive development in Africa requires a fundamental departure from the prevailing social protection paradigm and a return to a wider vision of society that embeds social policy with a wider development strategy. Rather than the mono-tasking of social policy (protection for destitution), social policy performs multiple functions: production, protection, re-distribution, reproduction, and social cohesion or nation-building. All of these require grounding in the norms of equality and social solidarity.

For our purpose here, we define social policy as the "collective public efforts aimed at affecting and protecting the social well-being of people within a given territory" (Adesina, 2009: 38). There is more to social policy than what the state does or statism. Further, social policy goes beyond "guaranteeing a minimum level of social well-being through social insurance, unemployment insurance, old-age pension, or pro-natalist social provisioning"; it includes publicly-mediated or guaranteed access to education, healthcare, employment, housing, and so on (Adesina, 2009). Economic policy, on the other hand, refers to public efforts directed at the functioning of the economy through the use of fiscal and monetary instruments. Although distinct, social and economic policies overlap, and are inter-dependent.

2. Social Protection: Mapping the Paradigm

The role of "travelling ideas" in policy advice is widely-acknowledged (Toye, 1991; Garba, 2007). More than benign exchange among intellectuals and policy-makers or a medium for policy-learning, ideas may serve the function of seizing control of the policy terrain, undermining policy-learning, generating policy atrophy in the host local context, distorting local realities, and undermining long-term sustainable development. The new social protection paradigm represents such an instance of travelling ideas. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) has devoted considerable energy and resources to pushing its policy agenda on "social transfers" as the preferred policy instrument (see Hickey et al., 2008). The World Bank has devoted considerable efforts and resources to merchandising its "social risk management" framework (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). With aid sometimes being made conditional on the adoption of the particular donor's policy-instrument of choice, this is not a domain of benign policy influence-wielding. A lesson of the past 30 years for African countries is that "donor harmonisation" can all too often become policy pincer-attack; a "trappers' game" (Adesina, 2003, 2006; Hickey et al., 2008: 8).

2.1. Social Protection Discourses: unity in diversity

The march of the Social Protection paradigm has, indeed, been long. In this section, we engage with the different manifestations of the social protection discourse and policy regime and identify the differences and commonalities among the different strands of the discourse.

The Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) programme was launched in 1987, ostensibly as a multi-agency programme housed in the World Bank. This was in response to the mounting evidence of the severe social cost of the orthodox structural adjustment programme (see

Jolly and Cornia, 1984; Cornia et al, 1987, 1988; Stewart, 1991). Rather than a fundamental rethink of the policy instrument and the ontological foundations of structural adjustment, SDA involved the use of “safety-nets” to address the “social costs” of adjustment. A defining principle was the strict targeting of those considered to be in dire poverty—a common thread in the different strands of the social protection paradigm. As one variety of “safety net” approach replaced another—from Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) programme to Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)—there was little to demonstrate that the tide of severe impoverishment was turning. Between 1981 and 2005, in sub-Saharan Africa, an additional 176 million people fell into destitution, bringing the total to 388 million people (UNDESA, 2009: 16)

The recourse to the “Social Risk Management” (SRM) framework (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000) was supposed to mark a shift in the Bank’s discourse and understanding of vulnerability and its preferred anti-poverty policy instruments. “Social Protection,” Holzmann and Jørgensen (2000: 2) announced, “is back on the international agenda.” Behind the SRM lies the idea “that all individuals, households and communities are vulnerable to multiple risks” from diverse sources: environmental and “man-made”, although much of the latter could easily fall into the realm of force majeure. Poverty is understood in terms of vulnerability to these shocks. A good SRM framework is one that “effectively and efficiently handle[s] risk in its various forms” (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000: 6); it would need to reduce vulnerability and smoothen consumption (World Bank, 2001a: 9-11). It would combine “labour market interventions, social insurance... and safety nets, under a unifying scheme” (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000: 9). Its result will be to enhance welfare and equity, and promote economic development. The Bank (2001a: 10) claim that there is an interaction between SRM, social protection, and re-distribution. We will return to this later. Even so, the SRM framework remains wedded to the traditional safety-net discourse in two ways. First, is its definition of the social segment that is the focus of policy attention: the core is “to provide support to the critically poor” (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000: 11). Second, is the mechanism for reaching them: strict targeting. While the SRM is often presented as a departure from the earlier restrictive focus on safety-nets (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000; Holzmann and Kozel, 2007), the underlining logic remains the same: a focus on the ultra-poor (World Bank, 2001b, 2001b: 20; Alderman, 2000). The Bank proclaimed its dream of a world free of poverty (World Bank, 2001a, 2001b) and that the SRM was a move “from safety net to springboard”; this was supposed to be the trampoline!

Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) was a self-declared effort to transcend the SRM and other preceding framing of social protection. Against these, they set their idea of “transformative social protection”. For the authors, social protection covers:

> “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups” (2004: iii, 9).

Their point of departure was at three levels: what they called “problem identification”, “problem prioritisation”, and “social protection providers”. SRM and other framing of social protection suffer from problem identification because they are excessively restrictive and economistic reading of the causes of vulnerability. The difficulty with this approach to problem identification is that it is concerned with low income, living standard, or decline in income and livelihood as a result of vulnerability to external shock. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler argued that it was important to target both. The issue of providers, they argued, tended to be quite amorphous (public and public action). By contrast they favoured a broader set of providers: private, community, and public (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: 4). The transformative social protection agenda, they argued, takes us beyond the "deserving poor" focus of earlier ideas of social protection. Rather than expenditure smoothening social protection, they argued, we should go beyond "economic protection" and be truly "social":

> "Other forms of 'social protection' would address distinct problems of 'social vulnerability', not necessarily through resource transfers, but through delivery of social services, and through measures to modify and regulate behaviour towards socially vulnerable groups." (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: 9)

Unlike other approaches that are safety net-centric and address vulnerability ex-post, the approach offered by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) was supposedly concerned with vulnerability ex-ante, with "a broader conceptualisation of vulnerability than economic risk alone" (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007:23). Protection from vulnerability requires the structural causative factors that are deeply "embedded in the sociopolitical context" of society to be addressed. Nonetheless, their approach shares the defining elements of the Social Protection paradigm: excessive focus on "the socially vulnerable", and a refusal to engage the neo-liberal economic framework as immanently vulnerability-deepening. Social vulnerability (and its social justice discourse) is restricted to endogenous cultural and inter-subjective practices and regulations. Self-consciously, it locates itself within the "social exclusion" literature (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007:24).

A broader survey of the literature suggests that much of the discourse sits between the old safety-net and SRM discourse, and the "transformative social protection". Apart from being wedded to "chronic poverty", the instrument of choice for reaching the potential recipients is targeting (cf. Hickey, 2008; Devereux and Cipryk, 2009; Devereux et al, 2010).[1] The policy roll out (pilot-schemes) reveals the preponderance of this limited (if not limiting) understanding of social protection: chronic poverty-centric, highly ponderous and restrictive targeting mechanisms that are largely donor-funded and donor-driven, with INGOs as service providers at the delivery point. National institutions may be drawn into implementation, but often by targeting lower units of government departments. Relative to the rest of the civil service, the beneficiary units and their officials become well-resourced (almost pandered) and embedded in the donor-driven schemes. The result is the subversion of coherent policy-making, institutional-learning, and knowledge-building within the public service. It is not uncommon for different INGOs and donors to be implementing different and fragmented programmes with different units of the same department, and operating in different policy silos.

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[1] See the articles featured in IDS Bulletin 38(3), *Debating Social Protection*.

The "near-hegemony" of "social transfer" schemes is partly in response to the problem of aid-fatigue and the need for donors to justify their existence and the use of the resources they administer to their home audience. Social transfer-focused budget support or schemes directly implemented or contracted by the donor-agency would seem to give a new impetus to how to justify additional aid flow in the context of severe aid-dependency abroad and aid-fatigue at home (see Dani, 2008; Holmqvist, 2009). The focus on the "recipient countries" has involved aggressive policy-merchandising. Of the various bilateral agencies pushing the social protection paradigm, the UK DfID has been self-consciously the "lead-donor". The agenda has, self-consciously, sought to secure policy influence through:

> "The provision of expert technical assistance, the studies that it commissions, the study tours that it facilitates and also through the knowledge that its advisors possess of ST/SP. This capacity has allowed DFID to directly influence debates over ST/SP in ways that has increased the number of beneficiaries who benefit from ST/SP schemes (for example, Ethiopia) and persuaded government officials to adopt social transfer pilot projects (for example Zambia)" (Hickey et al, 2008: 7).

Along the line, the effort has been to promote a number of the pilot cases (Ethiopia and Zambia, in particular) "as an African success story". Apparently, doing so is supposed to remove the donor-scent on the schemes. This is an agenda that works more with middle-level officials in line departments. Hickey et al (2008) and Devereux et al (2010) have recorded how less successful this policy merchandising is with "more powerful political and policy actors". The captive audience seems to be the "weak policy actors" (Hickey et al, 2008: 8).[2] The explanation for the failure to penetrate the more powerful policy-makers is absence of "political will"; policy-makers "who just don't get it." We discuss the problem with this "explanation" next.

3. The Social Protection Paradigm: a critique

The social protection paradigm reflects the ideational crisis at the heart of the dominant international multilateral, bilateral or "development community" in the wake of the seeming hegemonic power of neo-liberal orthodoxy, and how to respond to the existential crisis it created (Adesina, 2010). Earlier we have highlighted the three main features of the social protection discourse: excessive focus on the ultra-poor; the preference for means-testing and targeting, and the disconnection between the "social" and the broader economic aspects of development policy-making. The "social" almost invariably functions as the flip-side of the "economic" in the broader neo-liberal discourse.

[2] This targeting of "weak" actors on the African landscape is not limited to the field of social policy. DfID's recent foray into the field of social science research support in Africa involved a self-conscious decision to side-step Africa's oldest and longest surviving social science research council (CODESRIA)—founded in 1973, with headquarters in Dakar, Senegal and flourishing—and create a competing, new organisation based on the same clientilist approach in which UK researchers and institutions take control of 'capacity building' in the field of Africa's social sciences. The parallel with the effort to impose a particular vision of social policy on African policymakers is instructive. The assumption, it would seem, is that Africa and Africans lack the capacity to think for themselves or do anything on their own.

The focus on chronic poverty has often involved a superficial consideration, if not a benign neglect, of inequality. All these come from the classical Poor Law mores and its resurrection in neo-liberal thinking. However, high levels of inequality, such as those witnessed both globally and within sub-Saharan Africa, are not only detrimental to building an inclusive society, they also violate the ethical basis of successful social policy regimes.

Significant, it is the neo-liberalism policy regime that exacerbated intra-national and global inequality and the vulnerability that the social policy paradigm claims that it wishes to fix; economic policy regime that "mal-adjusted" African economies (Mkandawire, 2005). Paradoxically, it is in this period that the mantra of "pro-poor" growth came to dominate the global policy agenda and deployed by the same global and local institutions responsible for engineering the subversion of inclusivity. As Titmuss (1964: 33) noted nearly half-a-century ago, those who protest against such disparity do not do so "because of envy; they do so because... [such inequalities] are fundamentally immoral". Crucially, such levels of inequality are socially detrimental. In the South African context, public debate on the scourge of violent crime proceeds with seeming little capacity of "public intellectuals" to connect the dots: between the violence and shocking level of socio-economic inequality. The neglect of inequality and the failure to confront the neo-liberal underpinnings of social vulnerability—especially its ontological premise—are part of a residual social protection approach (Esping-Andersen and Korpi, 1987).

This brings us to the question of evidence. Devereux and Cipryk (2009:20) have argued that the evidence in support of the positive impact of cash transfer schemes in Africa "is accumulating rapidly". Much of the evidence is aimed at influencing policy and scholarly debates and persuading policy-makers to adopt the favoured policy instrument; the mantra of the so-called "evidence-based" policy-making. The problems with the adduced "evidence" are, however, many. First, impact assessments are funded by the same agency, which has interest in showing the efficacy of the schemes. It is difficult to separate hard data-informed research from consultancy-driven interpretation of data, in support of a priori assumption that the instrument is efficacious. The result is that the evidence adduced is often thin and suspect. An interesting case is the website (http://www.social-transfersevidence.org/), which seeks to show-case "evidence" that social transfer works). Highlighted findings from the Kalomo Project, for instance, claim that "the ownership of chickens increased by 15% points" among beneficiaries. In another, it is claimed that "asset ownership increased from 4.2 assets at the baseline to 5.2 at the time of evaluation". In the case of the South African Child Support Grant, a featured study argued that "7.6% of beneficiaries spent a minimum of one hour in the previous week collecting water, as opposed to 7.3% of non-beneficiaries" and the difference for Africans was 8% for beneficiaries, against 9.5% for non-beneficiaries.[3] How these are supposed to be the basis for persuading policy-makers is difficult to say. This is apart from the fact that, in the absence of more information on the sampling procedure used, a 0.3% or even a 1.5% variation between "experimental" and control group may be statistically meaningless.

Underscoring these gesturing to demonstrate the "economic value" or "asset-building" impact of social transfer is a discourse wedded to the neo-liberal framework and the

[3] See http://www.socialtransfersevidence.org/evidences (Accessed 20 June 2010).

“deserving poor” logic of the initial selection of beneficiaries. *If chicken ownership did not increase among recipients, would they still be unworthy of the effort to mitigate their poverty?* Similarly, the attribution of a 3% increase in school enrolment as evidence that the cash transfer scheme works stretches the imagination of the floor of evidence below which we cannot go.[4] What is missing is any discussion of the wider social and economic dynamics that reversed the initial post-independent impressive rise in school enrolment in Zambia, and whether cash transfer is a legitimate policy instrument for getting every child of school-age back into the classroom, when access to education should be a justiciable right. The “economic” justification for humiliating policy-instruments betrays the lack of commitment, *ab initio*, to equality and social solidarity.

The pilot cash-transfer scheme in Kalomo, Zambia is a widely-celebrated example (Schubert, 2004; Wilman et al, 2007). Important as it is for those in desperate need, the depth, coverage, adequacy, and sustainability of such a project should concern anyone interested in a long-term development agenda. The scheme transferred US$10 per household monthly. Schubert (2004) reported a total household coverage of 1, 027, and an average household size of 3.75. This translates into an average cash transfer of a little under 9 cents per person, per day or 7.45% of the widely-used international threshold for destitution! Although a pilot scheme, the eligibility criteria are quite restrictive. The coverage of those considered “food poor” was 20% and 33% for those classified as living in “critical poverty”. This claim of success becomes surreal when set against the scale of the national challenges that Zambia faces. Official national data suggests that some 66% of the population live below the national poverty datum line. Twenty-five per cent of primary school age-cohort is not in school, rising to 33% for the secondary school age-cohort. Nearly 50% of children under the age of five are stunted; and here we have not mentioned the scourge of HIV/AIDS (Barrientos et al, 2005).

More problematic is the nature of the advocacy surrounding the social protection paradigm, often led by single-issue INGOs and bilateral or multilateral organisations. In the argument, affordability is generally taken as a given fact, and the non-adoption of the proposed policy, a result of absent political will, if not more sinister. The problem with single-issue focus, and the attendant absence of holistic development engagement, is best demonstrated by two cases. The first concerns one of the more illustrious international multilateral organisations. The other relates to the INGOs involved in advocacy work that concern children or old people.

The first concerns ILO’s Decent Work Pilot Programme in Ghana (ILO, 2006). While it claims that poverty remains the most pressing single issue in Ghana, and that farmers in Ghana represent by far the most affected group, with informal sector operatives coming “a distant second”, nonetheless, the scoping study “came out in favour of a focus on the informal economy because the ILO no longer has a current programme and expertise on rural development... but a comparative advantage over other actors concerning the informal economy.” (ILO, 2006: 33). Apparently, if Ghana requires policy advice for the portion of its population that is recognised as being most vulnerable, it would have to ask another

[4] Presentation made at the “Africa Regional Workshop on Cash Transfers, Mombasa, Kenya” (26-28 February 2007): Social Cash Transfer in Zambia: Setup, Lessons Learned and Challenges.

organisation, which might have expertise in agrarian issues but not education or infrastructure development. Development issues are rarely so neatly compartmentalised.

The second (relating to the affordability argument) has been repeatedly canvassed by the ILO with regard to a comprehensive social-security agenda. Here, however, we will focus on HelpAge International (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). The organisation has argued persistently that universal old-age pension is affordable, costing no more than 2.7% of the GDP of a country. In June 2010, a World Bank working paper (Diethier et al, 2010) was hailed by a senior official of HelpAge International. While admitting that the cost of implementing a universal old-age pension pegged at no less than USD2.5 per person, per day "is higher for poorer countries where $2.5 makes up a larger proportion of average income" the choice, it would seem, cannot be one of affordability but of political will (Beales, 2010). This is not a new argument; in its earlier incarnation as "safety nets for the very poor", the Bank made similar claims (World Bank, 2001b: 19).

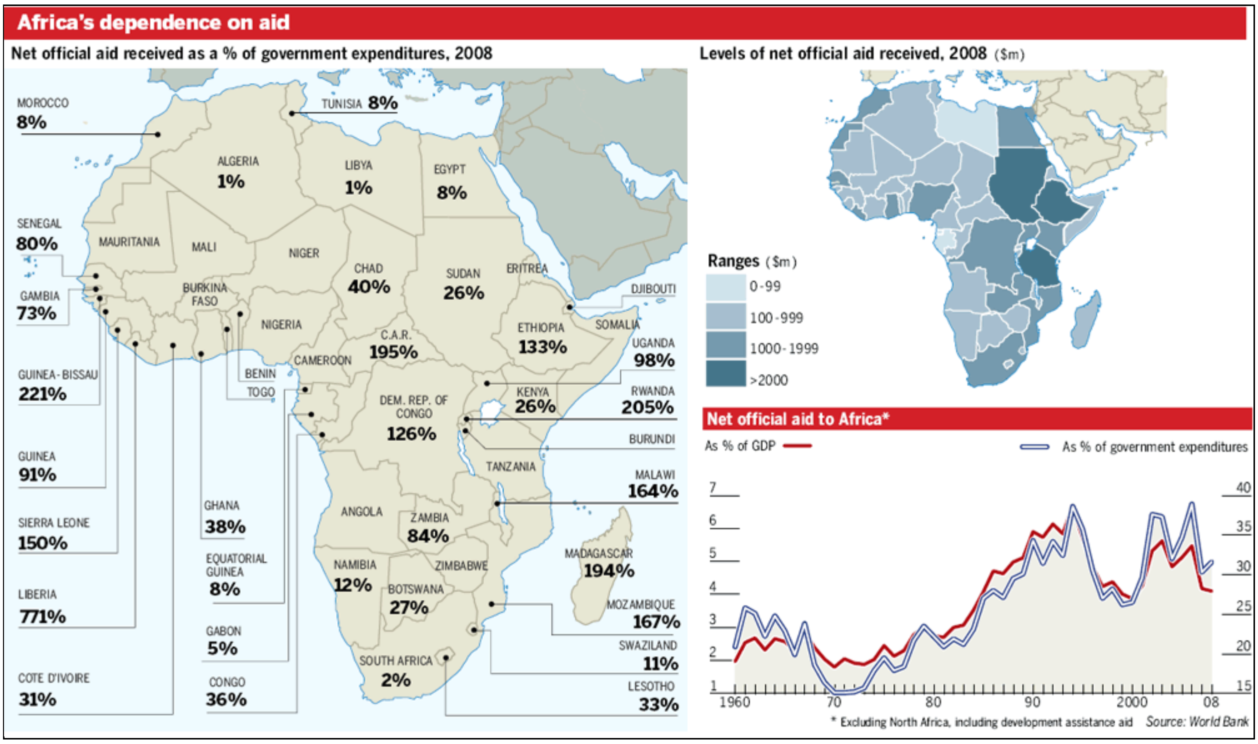
In 2006, citing a report it commissioned (see Gorman, 2006), HelpAge (2006) had argued that "a new survey of non-contributory social pension schemes shows that pensions are affordable in low and middle income countries". Two thirds of the countries covered in the survey had "a social pension" system costing no more than one per cent of their GDP. Yet, as Devereux et al (2010) observed, there is considerable difficulties in convincing many African policy-makers to adopt the policy menu of "social protection"; each driven by different INGO, donor agency or by the consultants who generate the "evidence" behind their advocacy efforts. While Devereux et al (2010) were disinclined towards a mono-argument, blaming the absence of "political will", the thrust of their "where to next?" question is about using new strategies to persuade the policy-makers about what donors argue is in the best interest of their peoples. Interestingly, Devereux et al (2010) paid scant attention to the comment of a West African official that her government undertakes "social protection" even if they do not give it such label.

Single-issue advocacy faces a much more deep-rooted problem: analytical and policy blinkers regarding why affordability is much more than a simple question of the share of GDP that the favourite social protection instruments will cost. In other contexts, the conflation of interest, advocacy and evidence would be ***immediately*** understood as a conflict of interest; not in policy-merchandising. Consultants are employed, who themselves have pecuniary interests in delivering "evidence" for the commissioning body; which itself needs to justify its continuing funding from a donor organisation; which needs 'evidence' confirming its raison d'être; which may itself be as much about personal careers and pecuniary interest as it is about commitment to social justice! ***If this were a discussion of African political institutions and elites the epithet of "neo-patrimonialism" would have featured repeatedly.***

The problem with paradigms is not so much that they shift; it is that they are blinkers. Those whose raison d'être is about policy singularity all too often fall into the trap of reducing all policy-making to their advocacy concerns. Advancing the well-being of children and old persons remains a fundamental principle of a policy framework; it is at the core of a social commitment to solidarity and equality. The problem is that neither equality nor solidarity is central to contemporary social protection advocacy. For instance, when the phrase "universal" is used to define coverage, it actually means targeting (see HelpAge and Save the Children, 2004). It is a targeting of the type that requires someone to be identified as indigent, and demonstrate that he or she is one of the "deserving poor".

While a focused engagement with a policy issue has its values, it does so in the context of (a) its ideational or normative grounding, and (b) its connection with other levers of policy-making. The problem is that, in the real world in which African policy-makers operate like any other, focusing on pulling one policy lever does not (and should not) make sense. To use a well-worn phrase in Development Studies, inter-sectoral linkages and cross-thematic framing are central to policy coherence and positive outcomes. Effective social protection of children and old persons from vulnerability, much less, poverty or destitution, works not in segmented and isolated deployment of policy instrument, but in a wider vision of equality and solidarity-grounding of economic and social-policy thinking, and broader instruments. In the context of severe aid-dependence - in which official aid accounts for between 38% (Ghana) and 771% (Liberia) of government expenditure (see Figure 1), it would seem obvious that policy advocates should comprehend the incredulity of a minister of finance or a country's president who is told all she needs is another two-and-half per cent of her country's GDP to implement a universal pension scheme.

Figure 1: Aid Dependence in Africa



Source: Financial Times 2 June 2010.

Yet, as Figure 1 shows, chronic aid-dependence was not always the case with African countries. The dramatic rise since the 1980s is not simply a question of profligacy; it is rooted in a new global-policy environment that succeeded in simultaneously eroding the fiscal base of the state, shrinking the productive base of the economies, subverting economic growth, and engineering massive social dislocation. In most cases it reversed the social development gains of the pre-1980 era (Chang and Grabel, 2004; Mkandawire, 2005; Adesina et al, 2006; Adesina. 2007). *A defining characteristic of the social-protection paradigm is the refusal to engage challenge the economic instruments and philosophy that* *generated the very crisis that it claims it wishes to fix.* This narrowing of ideational vision (Adesina, 2010) is grounded in this aversion, as are the policy instruments of choice, the focus on "extreme" vulnerability, targeting, and the disconnecting of social policy and economic policy. The persistent effort to show that social-policy instruments can contribute to growth or activate economic activities, without confronting the market-transactional logic of neo-liberalism, reflects the ideational concession to neo-liberalism not its negation. *If we cannot show evidence that universal child or old-age allowance contributes to "asset-building" or improved school enrolment or a 15% increase in chicken ownership, would eradicating child or old-age poverty be a less deserving moral imperative of society? How to achieve this may be a different story.*

In the context of aid-dependence, the erosion of the economic base of the countries, and massive impoverishment (Adesina, 2006; 2007), argument of affordability misses the point about the levers of effective poverty-reduction. Focusing on re-distribution with little engagement with the growth-side is neither good policy-making nor good advocacy. Often, the social protection discourse assumes that to speak of "re-distribution" is, ab initio, progressive; it is not! While re-distribution (even those that do not make stigma a criterion of benefit) may work in a context in which poverty is transient or the burden of 5 to 10 per cent of the population, societies in which 50% or more are poor have to make raising the productive capacity of society a priority in their anti-poverty strategy (Adesina, 2006; 2007; 2009). From the policy side, is that the most effective social-protection mechanisms in a developing economy must combine economic development (growth with structural transformation of the economy) with vast improvements in social and political development outcomes. The most powerful instruments in achieving protection against economic shocks do not start off as "social protection" instruments. Attention to education, as a key instrument in a social policy regime that delivers long-term "social protection", is one of the more obvious gaps in the social protection paradigm. In the first two decades of post-independence Africa, universal, publicly-funded education and health-care provisioning were the most effective social-policy instruments that simultaneously met the objectives of growth and social protection (Adesina, 2007; 2009). A lesson that contemporary African policy-makers can learn from the policy-pioneers of the late 1950s and the 1960s about the public investment in education, broadly, rather than "basic education" is the positive intersectoral linkage between public spending on education and economic growth. The idea that what Africa needs is the lowest common denominator of basic education (as prescribed within the Millennium Development Goals) is not only contrary to the lesson of history, but also makes little policy-sense precisely at the moment in human history when high-cognitive skills and education have become central to the functioning of an economy and global competitiveness.

Similarly, in many African countries production support for farmers, co-operatives for resource-pooling, price-stabilising and marketing instruments were vital in order to guarantee rural livelihoods and to generate the social funds that played the same role that the pension funds did in Finland (Kangas, 2006): infrastructure development and industrial development (Adesina, 2008). Malawi's agriculture turn-around is a useful lesson in the multi-tasking of social policy (Sapkota, 2007). Seemingly production-focused instruments, such as farm subsidy and the marketing boards, can dramatically increase production, raise household income and smoothen consumption of farming households. It protects from vulnerability without the indignity of means-test instruments. The farming subsidy in

Malawi is a medicine the neo-liberal policy-doctors specifically prohibited. Indeed, in 2001, based on a report commissioned by the European Union, the IMF had forced the government of Malawi to sell off its grain reserve. It left the country vulnerable when the next cycle of drought hit the region (Adesina, 2006). "The 2002/03 humanitarian crisis" that Devereux et al (2010) indicated as the trigger for the big-push in the donor-inspired and 'development' community-driven emergency relief work and cash-transfer schemes was a result of the policy failure instigated by the same 'development' community!

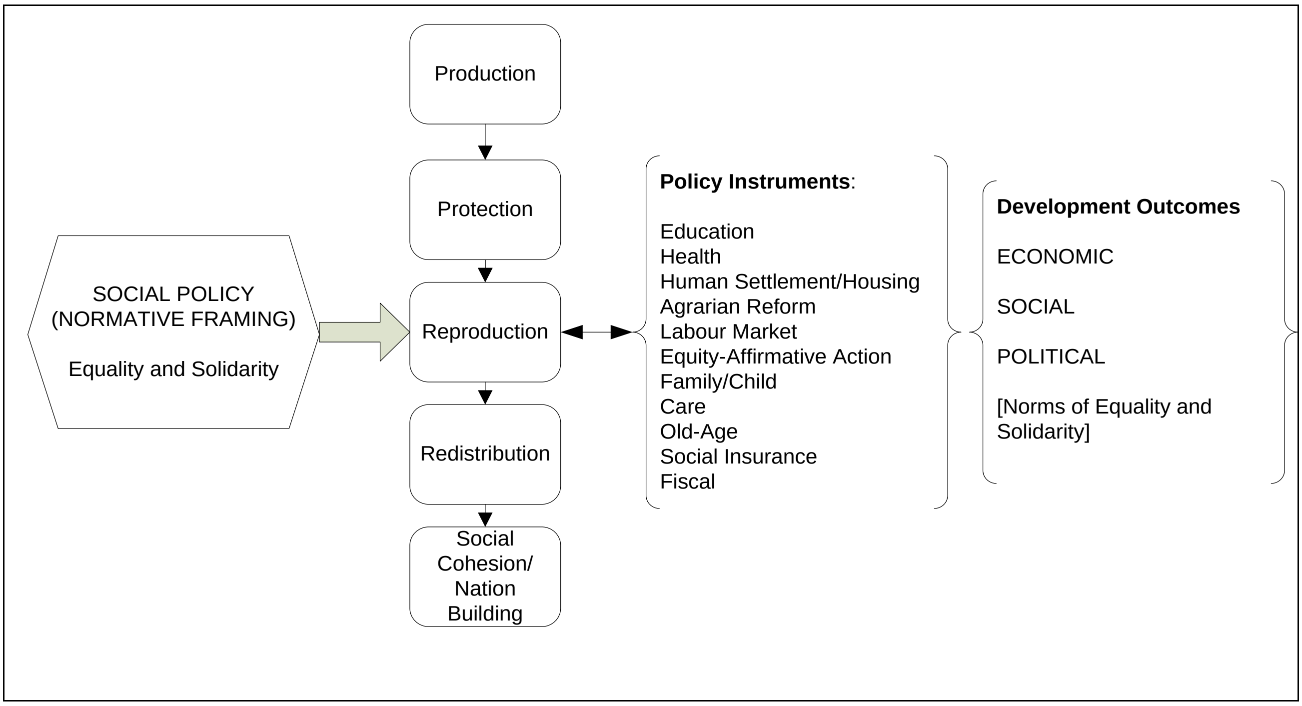
Furthermore, there is no evidence, historically, that framing social protection in poor-centric terms leads to successful policy-outcomes in poverty reduction, much less in poverty eradication. As Korpi and Palme (1998) reminded us, the more we focus on poverty, the less likely we are to be successful in reducing poverty. Making the poor dependent on the generosity of the rich creates a zero-sum outcome; non-universal social provisioning tends to produce resentment among those whose taxes fund the benefits or social grants (cash transfers) to the poor. Paradoxically, in each of the primary European social policy regimes (Beveridgean, Bismarckian, or Nordic) successful outcomes involved combining economic and social policy; production and the protection functions of social policy.

As noted earlier, "universal" coverage in INGO-speak may in fact mean targeting. Its claim to re-distribution has a long history, but only to the extent that "the stigmata of the poor law test, moral judgments by people about other people and their behaviour, were a condition of redistribution" (Titmuss, 1965: 15). The extent to which these might be an affront to the social norms of the solidarity of the communities that these social protection regimes are supposed to "help" was gleaned by Devereux et al (2010: 5): "it is not uncommon for direct recipients to share their transfers within communities, reflecting a preference for wider distribution than is stipulated by targeting criteria - even at the cost of lower benefits to themselves". Rather than grasp how that this is an effect of the norms of solidarity which suffuses the communities, such altruism is often considered a "leakage" or Type II error! That the "development community" is doing fundamental harm to the glue that holds their target communities together has attracted little introspection. It is a measure of how 'humanitarian effort' can be inhumane and induce anomie. Targeting instruments function "by operating punitive tests of discrimination; by strengthening conceptions of approved and disapproved dependencies; and by a damaging assault on the recipients of welfare in terms of their sense of self-respect and self- determination" (Titmuss, 1965: 15). The contractors, donors, and INGO officials, who claim to be driven by the norm of social justice, have eagerly assumed the roles of "public assistance relieving officers" in Africa, even though their own countries repudiated such a method decades ago.

4. A Return to Wider Vision

A starting-point is the recognition that successful efforts at building socially-inclusive developmental agenda have always depended on visionary agenda setting, and that social policy has multiple functions. Successful economic and social development efforts derive from visionary agenda-setting that embrace a wide vision of society with a gaze planted on a long-term horizon. While it is true that successful cases depend on the use of "evidence" (scholarly studies, impact assessment, etc.), this is often in the service of the visionary agenda, not the reverse. Indeed, in many of the successful cases, initial the "evidence" suggested was that they should not, and could not, do what we now hail them for doing (see Myrdal, 1960).[5] In the more successful cases, visionary agenda was grounded in the norms of equality and social solidarity. They embrace the idea of the "Good Society" or of a "Better Life for All." The shared vision combines the agency of those previously disadvantaged with the buy-in of other segments of society. The initial coalescing of social forces is sustained by the norms of Encompassing Social Policy (Korpi and Palme, 1998), which rest on universal access, supplemented by targeted instruments to protect the vulnerable, inter alia. Thus, the universal coverage not only enhanced social and political commitment, but it also made reforming the system and the recovery from the crisis easier and faster (Kangas and Palme, 2005). It is useful to re-iterate that social policy instruments are not about "public goods", at least not in the Samuelson's (1954: 387) sense of the "collective consumption of goods". Rather they are social and economic *commons* because they involve the idea of a collective, common good (not 'goods'). Equity, rather than "non-excludability" or "non-rivality", is the determinate condition for access, and access may be structured on the basis of the gravity of need rather than presentation of demand.

Figure 2: Transformative Social Policy: norms, function, instruments and outcomes



Poverty-reduction, in countries with high poverty levels, requires a return to holistic development thinking; it requires a return to the wider vision of development and social policy. It is this wider vision that is encapsulated in the idea of Transformative Social Policy (UNRISD, 2006; Mkandawire, 2007; Adesina, 2007).[6] Figure 2 sets out the link between the ideational (normative) grounding of this conception of social policy, its multiple functions and diversity of policy instruments, and the development outcomes that it achieves. Central to our idea of transformative social policy is its grounding in the norms of equality and social

[5] In this section, we draw on Adesina (2010).

[6] See also Arjan de Haan's (2007) *Reclaiming Social Policy*.

solidarity. Universal membership and coverage in provisioning are outcomes of such a normative commitment. Social policy framed by these norms serves many functions: production, protection, reproduction, re-distribution, and social cohesion or nation-building. The transformative social-policy instruments range from education to healthcare, agrarian reform, child-care, old-age care, and to fiscal instruments. The development outcomes feed not only social and economic development (growth with structural transformation) but also political development, as well. The outcomes, themselves, go on to reinforce and deepen the normative framework of the social-policy regime.

Central to the model is the immanent link between social policy and economic policy, bound by the shared norms of equality and solidarity. The interconnection is central to a variety of social-policy regimes: the Bismarckian, the Beveridgean, the Nordic and the Nationalist models (Adesina, 2009). The 1942 Beveridge Report sets out as the second of its three principles, the idea that "social insurance should be treated as one part only of a comprehensive policy of social progress". The link in the Beveridgean model is in his second report in 1944, concerned with full employment. The 1944 report was "more than a sequel. Maintenance of employment is wanted for its own sake and not simply to make a Plan for Social Security work more easily" (Beveridge, 1944: 18). These are two sides of the same coin in vanquishing what Beveridge referred to as the "five giants on the road to re-construction: Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness" (Beveridge, 1942). The Bismarckian model was more directly driven by the imperatives of industrialisation, nation-building, and weaning the working class off revolutionary ideas. Similarly, the "Nationalist model" (Adesina, 2009) was driven by the assumption that independence was the initial step on the long road to post-colonial re-construction, with the objectives of rapid economic development and the defeat of "the trinity of ignorance, poverty and disease" (Mkandawire, 2006). The Nordic model similarly combines economic development and social policy. Its capacity to combine production with dignity was possible because the functioning of the labour market was grounded in the normative framework that bound economic and social policies. The outcomes have been, relatively, low levels of inequality and poverty, and better social development outcomes in health, education and international competitiveness. As Mkandawire (2007) noted, transformative social policy enhances labour market efficiency and innovation.

Transformative social policy relates not only to the economy or protection from destitution, but the transformation of social relations, as well. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of gender relations and equality. We can cite the child-care policy that derives from this; a fundamental difference between the British and Nordic social landscape is in the investment in early child-care support and education in the latter, which is universal in coverage and grounded in the norms of equality and solidarity. The result is vastly difference gender profile: releasing women to enter into the labour market and fostering the dual-earner family model. Social-policy regimes grounded in solidarity and norms of equality are much better at producing social cohesion and inclusivity.

Finally, social policy for a wider vision of social and economic development agenda-setting is not simply something that "the state does". The current tendency to define social policy in these terms does not square with the historical roots of social policy in Europe or the diversity of the policy-making bodies, financing, and provisioning mechanisms. It is more useful to see social policy as multi-faceted, with diverse delivery mechanisms, within and outside the state. The state-community partnership in setting the social-policy agenda, the delivery, the monitoring, and the fine-tuning is not only about fiscal sustainability in low-income countries, but also about community buy-in and ownership. In building inclusive societies, they facilitate what Amartya Sen (2009) refers to as "public reasoning". What these call for is a fundamental re-think of how we define and shape the social-policy agenda specifically, and the development agenda more broadly.

5. Conclusion

The ascendance of neoliberalism might be a classical Gladstonean case of "ideas conspiring with power" but it flourished on the basis of its claimed superior ability to deliver on better economic performance and enhance human welfare. The result within the first decade of structural adjustment was widespread entitlement failure, increasing inequality, and worsening economic volatility. The responses to this crisis social existence and economic livelihood have either been shaped by the advocates of the neo-liberal economic policy framework or at the expense of a significant concession of the ideational and policy spaces to the ascendant neo-liberalism. The result has been the narrowing of the vision of development. This, we have argued, is reflected in the scholarship around social development, where the pre-occupation has turned increasingly to "social protection" and "chronic poverty". Much of the latter is based on the norms of the Poor Law schemes, regardless of protests to the contrary.

Paradoxically, while the global economic crisis triggered by sub-prime lending in the United States is deepening the global social and economic crisis, it nonetheless marked the end, at least at the ideational level, of the neoliberal triumphalism of the preceding three decades. Both mark a unique moment to start constructing a new social agenda narrowly and development agenda more widely. We have argued that such an agenda would require a return to the wider vision of development. This would require a return to visionary agenda-setting, anchored on the norms of equality and social solidarity. Transformative Social Policy offers the conceptual tools and the policy parameters for such return to a wider vision for enhancing human capabilities and economic development. Rather than social policy being defined almost exclusively in terms of social protection, transformative social policy calls attention to the multiple objectives of social policy. Central to this new agenda is framing the economic with the same norms of equality and solidarity as the social policy.

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