Pastoralists and markets: livestock commercialization and food security in north-eastern Kenya

Nunow, A.A.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Pastoralism and public policy in north-eastern Kenya

Various past policies relevant to pastoralism will be reviewed with a view to analysing trends in government policies in Kenya. Occasional reference will be made to relevant colonial policies on pastoralism, but the discussion will focus on the policies of the independent Kenyan government towards pastoralists. More recent developments in the public policy domain through what may be referred to as 'rural urbanisation' or the creation of new settlements in north-eastern Kenya will be discussed. Empirical evidence is cited while considering the cases of Garissa District and Wajir District as examples. We will then pay closer attention to the various processes besides the creation of new settlements, through which the pastoral lands of North Eastern Province continue to shrink, thus accelerating land degradation and desertification.

Policy trend analysis

Government policy towards pastoralism and pastoralists has generally not been favourable. Various authors have discussed such policies. Dietz identifies certain periods and discusses the policies of the various governments during each period. The pre-colonial economic geography of East Africa has been referred to as a sea of pastoralism with a few islands of agricultural production (Dietz 1987). However, a combination of natural calamities such as drought and disease, and non-supportive colonial and post-colonial policies have led to a decline in pastoralism since the beginning of this century. For most of the colonial period in Kenya, pastoralist areas including those in the north-east were 'closed districts' where movement was restricted and new settlements could

---

1 'Public policy' and 'government policy' are used interchangeably in the text.
2 The data on Wajir District used here were obtained from a report by Oxfam (an NGO on Wajir District, and we acknowledge and appreciate these materials).
only take place with the consent of the colonial administration (Zaal 1998). The colonial period in Kenya was characterised by restrictive policies towards pastoralism, including destocking campaigns, the imposition of tribal boundaries, restrictive grazing schemes and quarantines which hampered marketing off-take from the African stock.

Colonial policies were biased in favour of European settlers and very little attention was given to projects supporting Africans. A change in colonial attitudes towards African agriculture came in 1954 when a new blueprint was produced. The new policy was contained in 'A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya' (Swynnerton 1954). The focus of this policy blueprint emphasised the need for destocking and grazing controls. This is reflected in the statement that:

The African stock owner, like his European counterpart, is reluctant to sell when weather and grazing conditions are favourable and he is as yet far from being convinced of the need for control of stock numbers. But this control must come, and come quickly, if the deterioration of the pastoral areas is to be arrested. The provision of water supplies and the opening of new grazing in the tsetse area will merely aggravate the present position and extend it over a wide area if we do not at the same time, and as the policy of the central government, require and enforce some form of stock control (Swynnerton 1954:32).

Thus the earlier perceptions aimed at restricting livestock numbers and movement still persisted. Ideally, restocking was expected to improve the African rangelands, although no evidence was shown to prove that there were more animals than the land could support. The pastoralists then had enough land for their use and they did not see themselves threatened by overgrazing. Although a certain amount of cross-breeding to improve the African stock was allowed during this period, none was applicable to northern and north-eastern Kenya.

Grazing schemes (grazing blocks) were established in northern Kenya to control livestock movements and also ensure that grazing was done in rotation. A grazing block was expected to function as a 'complete' grazing area with all the livestock requirements such as water, salt licks and pasture. Each scheme had to adequately maintain a certain number of animals for a specified period. However, many of the grazing schemes established during earlier years had fallen into disuse by the end of the 1960s. African pastoral representatives were unhappy with projects that restricted livestock mobility as was the case with the grazing schemes. Restricting the movements of the pastoralists and their animals led to localised overgrazing in many parts of the Asals in Kenya. Commenting on the failure of the grazing schemes, Dietz states:

In 1961, only 10% of the existing schemes was still operative. The schemes came under severe attack by African politicians at the eve of independence. The insistence of livestock officials to enforce a policy that was regarded as totally inadequate during times of drought by the pastoralists had a long lasting effect on the attitude of pastoralists towards 'Government' (Dietz 1987:54).

Consequently, the pastoralists lost faith in government projects after the failure of the grazing schemes policy. It was accompanied by a deliberate marketing policy which had its genesis in the established of a Rhodesian-owned company, Liebig, set up in Athi
River to operate a meat canning factory in the late 1930s. In order to keep the factory operational, some pastoralist groups, such as the Samburu, were forced to sell their livestock to the factory at unacceptably low prices. As would be expected, this drew strong resistance from the pastoralists who saw the policy as exploitative. These policies were aimed at controlling the pastoralists in order to reduce pressure on the rangelands and had little to do with improving the welfare of the pastoralists:

... official effort to increase pastoral livestock marketing were grounded on perceptions of overgrazing; it was argued then, as now, that relief of overgrazing could only be accomplished by increasing the off-take rate, hence more livestock sales were to be encouraged (Kerven 1992:11).

In 1950, the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) was set up to take over and run the meat factory in Athi River that had previously been in the hands of Liebigs. To improve the marketing of livestock and to ensure sufficient supplies for the KMC, the African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO) was founded in 1952 and continued operating until its demise in 1963. After independence, the ALMO was replaced by a Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Livestock Marketing Division (LMD). However, the main purpose of the LMD was twofold: to reduce pressure on the range through increased off-take, and to ensure a continued supply of meat to the urban population. This was politically more important to the administration than the prosperity of the nomadic pastoralists. LMD operations and intentions are aptly described by Dietz:

Ideas were organized to produce a stratified beef industry. Arid areas would raise calves. After that ranches in the semi-arid areas would fatten the cattle. In the vicinity of the market, in more humid surroundings, the fattening would be finished, producing heavy weight/high quality animals (Dietz 1987:56).

In theory, the pastoralists in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (Asals) would provide the 'raw material' in the form of young immatures which would then be purchased and kept in 'holding grounds' within the Asals for a certain period. When the calves improved in weight, they would be transferred to the highlands in the ranches where they would further increase in weight and the quality of their meat would improve. The animals would then be slaughtered and the meat sold to urban consumers. This strategy had limited success because of the need for only young animals, and the control on meat prices. Naturally, the pastoralists were reluctant to sell the immatures since they would only fetch low prices and, particularly the female immatures were the future breeders and thus their reproductive capital. The pastoralists were reluctant to sell both male and female immatures and preferred to sell adult animals which could fetch higher prices. The meat from the fattened animals was sold in urban centres in the country at government-controlled prices. These price controls of meat remained in force until the mid-1980s when the meat market was liberalised. This strategy tended to favour the meat-consuming urban elite by making available cheap and high-quality meat, while the risks and costs of production were borne by pastoralists who only received low prices for their immatures.
The impact of colonial policies on nomadic pastoralism, most of which were inherited by the independent government, are summarised by Bonfiglioli:

The combined effects of the colonial policies towards pastoralists were to weaken the internal management and capabilities of pastoral societies' internal leadership, to disrupt the ecological balance of pastoral areas, to hasten the deterioration of natural resources and to reduce the capacity for reproduction, rendering pastoralists themselves more vulnerable to famine and crisis (Bonfiglioli 1992:13).

The colonial period in Kenya was one when little or no attention was paid to Asal development, and a similar situation persisted during the first three post-colonial development plans (RoK 1989). The Kenya Livestock Development Programme (KLDP) launched in 1968, was to implement the so-called 'group-ranch' policy, with the first phase continuing until 1974. The group-ranch policy was aimed at allocating the grazing land to groups of pastoralists who would own the land and manage it jointly. However the group ranches encountered many problems, notably; a lack of involvement by the local people, and a lack of local acceptance and support, which together ultimately led to the collapse of the group ranches. It may be argued that the beginning of any recognisable development priority in the arid and semi-arid lands was the Marginal Lands Pre-investment Study Project which was carried out in 1977. The tests and trials of various policies in the arid lands continued and the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme was started in 1979 with the 'integration of ASAL into the Kenyan economy' as one of its key objectives. The ASAL programme, however, was not initiated in any of the districts in north-eastern Kenya during its entire period of existence. It was not until the late 1980s that some of the north-eastern districts were included in the Drought Recovery Programme intended to improve the capacities of the Asal districts in coping with drought.

Within the government bureaucracy, it was felt that development at the grassroots could have more impact on rural development than a programme based in the centre of Nairobi. Consequently, on July 1 1983, the District Focus for Rural Development Strategy was officially launched. The district treasuries were given increased powers to disburse funds for projects and other expenditures. With the implementation of the 'District Focus' as it is commonly called, the importance of the districts increased as funds were allocated on the basis of districts as opposed to the previous system where funds were allocated on the basis of provinces and sectors of the economy.

While development was to be pursued through the District Focus strategy, famine relief programmes gained prominence, especially during drought years. With increasing incidences of drought since the 1970s, famine relief has been a common feature in dry areas, and the provincial administration became important in co-ordinating famine relief activities. The impact of relief interventions was not as significant as intended in many arid districts, including those of north-eastern Kenya but they still remain in place as a survival strategy for many households during times of crisis. The District Focus strategy did not succeed as was envisioned but it continues to exist as a government policy.
In order to centralise the issues of the 'marginal lands' as the Asals were sometimes called, a new government ministry was established in 1989, the 'Ministry of Reclamation and Development of Arid, Semi-Arid Areas and Waste Lands'. Its main goal was to coordinate the development of the dry areas, paying particular attention to the assessment of the potentials of these lands and the implementation of suitable development programmes and appropriate strategies for water-resource development. This ministry was later dissolved with the responsibility for the Asals being brought under the Office of the President.

The livestock sector came under an autonomous Ministry of Livestock Development until 1992 when it was merged with the Ministry of Agriculture. The amount of attention paid to the livestock sector by the government depended on whether it was assigned an independent ministry as it was for sometime before 1992, or whether it was merely a department or section of a larger ministry such as that of Agriculture. Several policy papers were formulated to give guidance on food production. For instance, according to Sessional Paper Number 2 of 1994 on National Food Policy, the role of the LMD had to be scaled down and it proposed the establishment of private abattoirs and the provision of refrigerated facilities in pastoral areas. In limiting the role of the LMD, the paper states:

The activities of the Livestock Marketing Division will be confined to assisting pastoralists in difficult areas where private traders cannot operate profitably. ... the government will encourage private entrepreneurs to set up slaughterhouses in the beef production areas, with the meat being moved in refrigerated trucks to central marketing places (RoK 1994:16).

Liberalisation of the meat market in the mid-1980s led to the emergence of private traders whose operations proved more efficient than those of the Kenya Meat Commission. The Kenya Meat Commission has subsequently been closed down because it could not compete in the liberalised marketing environment. At the same time, the LMD exists only in name, with no budget allocation from the parent ministry and no defined practical roles. Nowadays, most livestock marketing is in the hands of private traders with minimal involvement by government. However, due to capital and technology constraints, most pastoral areas including those of north-eastern Kenya, continue to be reservoirs of live animals for slaughter in the urban centres of the country. The pastoralists in northern Kenya might receive better prices for their animals if there were a meat-processing plant locally. At the moment, a certain amount of meat from Kajiado District is supplied to the Nairobi market in refrigerated meat matatus (Zaal 1998), but this marketing device has not yet reached the northern districts.

Having discussed the broader policies affecting the pastoral areas in Kenya, we now take a closer look at the more specific effect of the various policies on the pastoralists of north-eastern Kenya. The policies that we consider relevant to the Somali pastoralists in north-eastern Kenya will be discussed, including those that relate to livestock marketing, livestock health, water resources, improved breeding of livestock, and landloss through irrigation and the creation of settlements. Although some issues will
touch on the whole of North Eastern Province of Kenya, the emphasis will be on Garissa District.

Public policies in north-eastern Kenya

In 1909, the Northern Frontier District (NFD) was created to bring the area mainly inhabited by the Boran, Somali, Rendille, Gabra, Samburu and Sakuye under one jurisdiction. On independence in 1963, the NFD was divided, bringing the Somali-occupied section under a new administrative unit called North Eastern Province, with the Samburu to the Rift Valley and the others furnishes Eastern Province. The split in the NFD was an administrative decision but, like so many others, it was based on wider political factors. The social and economic events taking place in north-eastern Kenya continue to be influenced by political forces that have profound implications on the livelihoods of the pastoralists in the area.

Although public policies, both in colonial and post-colonial periods, were unfavourable to most of the pastoral areas in the country, those in the north-east were most affected by the negative policies, and benefited least from the positive ones compared to other pastoral areas in the country. This was mainly because of the distance from the centre of administration and government. For instance, policies aimed at improving livestock health and improved breeding during the colonial period concentrated on the settlers' stock. Indeed, most of the institutions aimed at improving the quality of stock were formed during the colonial period, and some continued to operate long after independence. These included the Kenya Stud Book established in 1920, the Kenya Milk Records (1949) and Central Artificial Insemination Station (1946). The activities of these institutions did not include north-eastern Kenya and many other pastoral areas. Regarding livestock health, the focus was on the development and improvement of diagnosis and control using vaccines and drugs. Institutions created to perform these roles include the Veterinary Research Laboratories and the East African Veterinary Research Organization (Gatheru & Shaw 1998). Except for periodic vaccination campaigns, the effects of these institutions on livestock in north-eastern Kenya were limited during the colonial period and in the post-colonial period.

Some of the livestock policies were unpopular with the Somali pastoralists and largely ineffective. For instance, the destocking policies were detested by the Somali pastoralists because they saw them as a deliberate move to impoverish their society. According to them, the argument of 'carrying capacity' and overstocking was mythical and merely designed to reduce their livestock numbers. Although the colonial administration may have had concerns for the long-term sustainability of the range, the underlying objective of their policies towards pastoralists, especially the nomadic populations in the remoter parts of the colony, appears to have been aimed at administrative convenience for government officials. It was considered difficult to enforce grazing and movement controls when pastoralists were nomadic — which led to sedentarisation efforts being undertaken as a prerequisite for effective grazing and movement controls. The same could be said of the independent Kenyan government which held the view that
sedentarisation would be the panacea for problems associated with pastoral nomadism. In the case of north-eastern Kenya, this became even more pronounced after the shifta movement aimed at the secession of northern Kenya to Somalia. After that government policies were geared towards the sedentarisation of the Somali pastoralists in the north-east.

This sedentarization process was rooted in the belief that settled pastoralists would be easier to administer. It also guarantees that they will be available for political participation, e.g. elections, whenever required. Consequently, various projects were initiated in northern and north-eastern Kenya with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of confinement and sedentarisation of the pastoralists. These included the grazing block project, irrigation schemes, and the creation of settlements. Of these, the latter can be said to have had the highest success for the government and the political elite from the region who wanted to see their people in defined centres so that they could be assured of their votes during elections. We will now discuss each of these strategies in turn, and assess their consequences for the pastoralists of north-eastern Kenya.

Grazing block system
The grazing block system started in northern and north-eastern Kenya in the late 1960s and early 1970s and was aimed at developing livestock and domestic water supplies as well as social and physical infrastructure, to promote livestock marketing and improve resource utilisation. Each grazing block had registered users consisting of the local social group. However, these users had neither legal corporate status to support their voice, nor did they have any title to the land. Initially, it was hoped that 'grazing associations' would be registered under the Societies Act (Cap 108) with a grazing license under the Trust Land's Act (Cap 288), but this became impractical since a society has no legal corporate status and it was inappropriate to license a legal non-entity to use land to which it had no legal adjudicated right (RoK 1990).3

In developing the water component of the grazing blocks project, boreholes were sunk within the blocks. The development of water sources often did not consider the location of the boreholes with respect to the grazing patterns practised in the area. This caused interference with the traditional distinction between the dry-season grazing areas and those of the wet season. Water was made available throughout the year in all areas without regard to the existing user regimes. The grazing block system did not succeed in producing the desired results because of poor planning and implementation. In fact, the development of water supplies in rangelands seriously disrupted 'the interface between pasture and stocking density since access to these modern water points was free for all contrary to the prevailing rules in respect of traditional wells' (RoK 1990). The livestock marketing component similarly failed because the LMD turned out to be unreliable. Many livestock auctions were not advertised in advance and the types of livestock sought for sale were not the type the pastoralists were willing to sell — such as the females and immatures. The project had no provision for improving the livestock breeds.

3 In all, seventeen grazing blocks were established between 1970 and 1980. Fourteen of these were in North Eastern Province, with the other three being in Eastern Province. The sizes of the grazing blocks ranged between 2,000 and 8,000 km² (or up to 800,000 ha).
When the grazing block system could not achieve its goals, it was abandoned and most of the boreholes have since fallen into disuse with only a few still being operational. The ecological consequences of the provision of poorly designed and implemented water projects have also been discussed with reference to southern Somalia. It was observed that one of the effects was heavy ecological degradation. While discussing the range condition in the lower Juba region, Little (1996:30) maintains that:

An excess of water points in the lower Juba area, especially in Afmadow District, has created land-use problems, as livestock over-use pastures around these resources. The large number of water points exacerbates range conditions by attracting outside herders, especially camel herders and their animals to the area.

Irrigated agriculture
The establishment of irrigated agriculture has similarly been a source of land-use conflicts in north-eastern Kenya. Both Garissa and Mandera districts have some irrigated agriculture using the Tana and the Daua rivers respectively, but the irrigation schemes in Garissa may be more important, because of their size and their effects. The first irrigated farm in Garissa was started in the early 1970s but widespread irrigated agriculture in the area did not start until 1983 when a Danida-funded programme was initiated. Under this programme, about 17 schemes were established with an average membership of about 40 households each, and average acreage of 0.5 and 1.0 acres per member. Some of the schemes already in existence prior to the arrival of the Danida project were the first to receive its support. Individuals and/or groups of people had to clear the land themselves and then seek assistance from Danida. This led to the spontaneous clearance of land along the river which was then improved and developed. Commenting on similar policies of other development assistance in the Asals, Finkel and Darkoh (1991:5-6) state that:

Many assistance projects in ASAL assuming that pastoralism is no longer viable have attempted to change the economic base by offering alternatives to pastoralism, mainly agriculture. ... The Israel ASAL mission report (March, 1990) has implied that the long-term option for ASAL development lies with the settlement of pastoralists on irrigation schemes. They propose massive development of ground water resources and suggest that availability of water will encourage settlement of pastoralists.

Despite efforts to promote/offer agriculture as an alternative to pastoralism, the results have been dismal, with most agro-pastoralists among the Somalis only using crop production to supplement their livestock production, and sometimes restocking from farm proceeds. Poulsen maintains that most development projects for pastoralists emphasise sedentarisation and the development of crop agriculture. The author points to the need to seriously explore the possibility of pastoral production to make it viable both in economic and environmental terms (Poulsen 1993). Writing specifically about irrigation in northern Kenya where similar behaviour could be observed, Little (1992: 170) states that:

---

4 Southern Somalia has a border with North-eastern Province of Kenya. During the colonial period, Southern Somalia was under the same administration as North-eastern Province (British rule) until 1927 when it was formally handed over to Italy, and became an Italian protectorate.

5 Danish International Development Agency (Danida) is the international development agency of the Government of Denmark.
For the community and homestead, irrigation activities are pursued as a means of diversifying income-earning opportunities. In no community or homestead category do individuals express a desire to become full-time farmers of irrigated lands. As a result, irrigation remains a supplemental activity, with communities and homesteads preferring flexibility in order to accommodate other economic activities, especially pastoralism.

Rather than taking up irrigated agriculture as an alternative to pastoralism, the Somali agro-pastoralists in Garissa District often use their farm proceeds to buy livestock, mainly small stock. This underscores the difficulties in changing the economic base of the pastoralists to any venture not compatible with their livestock enterprise. The attitude of the Somali pastoralists is not necessarily due to the community's attachment to livestock, but mainly because they lack alternative productive skills with similar costs and convenience. The irrigation schemes in Garissa arose more or less spontaneously without adequate planning given that the farmers cleared the land on their own to attract Danida support. This has resulted in substantial resource-use conflicts. Since all land in the area was communal land, the removal of the land for irrigation excluded the majority of the population from its use and caused de facto privatisation of the land. The farms were established along the river banks which were hitherto used by the pastoralists during the dry season. In addition to the loss of dry-season pastures, the pastoralists also lost access to the river water, which was now only accessible through limited and widely dispersed points along the river, the Malkas (see Figure 3.1). While livestock used to have numerous watering points along the river in the past, nowadays the pastoralists can only water their animals at certain points. There are occasions when the animals may be too weak to cover the long distances to get to the river water (points marked AB in Figure 3.1), and the pastoralists may decide to let their animals access water at former watering points (marked B in the figure). In the process, the animals have to cross through irrigated fields, which results in problems with the agro-pastoralists. This has occasionally created serious trouble and may continue to be one of the major sources of future conflicts on resources in the area. Figure 3.1 below illustrates the River Tana, the irrigation schemes and the watering points in Garissa District.

In the early 1990s, a World-Bank-sponsored project for the ASAL areas of North Eastern Province was initiated under the name Drought Recovery Programme (DRP). The first phase of this project, which ended in 1996, involved only one district from North Eastern Province, Mandera. However, the second phase (1997-2000), under the new name of Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP), incorporated the other two districts of Wajir and Garissa as well. The project is mainly involved in minor community development projects, some small-scale income-generating enterprises, livestock health, etc. Since the liberalisation of most sectors of the economy, the pastoralists are expected to meet the costs of livestock drugs. The ALRMP provides some 'drug kits' to groups of pastoralists who are then expected to maintain it on a revolving basis. In addition, some paravets\(^6\) are being trained by the project so that the pastoralists

---

\(^6\) A paravet is an Animal Health Attendant (AHA) who is usually found in rural areas and who has some basic skills in animal health acquired through practice and informal training.
can diagnose disease and treat their animals. These were some of the same issues that the past Asal projects attempted to address but without much success. It is hoped that the current project will be sensitive to the existing institutional and resource-use mechanisms with a view to improving the pastoral system rather than changing it, as was the case with most of the previous Asal projects in the country.

Figure 3.1
Loss of livestock watering points to irrigation in Garissa District

A sketch showing the alienation of livestock watering points for irrigation along River Tana in Garissa District

Key:
B: Watering point before irrigation
AB: Watering points after irrigation
Riv = River Tana

Land alienation in North Eastern Province

There has been increased sedentarisation of Somali pastoralists in north-eastern Kenya in the 1990s. Several factors are responsible for this phenomenon, with the most important single factor being the deliberate but unstated government policy towards the sedentarisation of pastoralists in the name of 'taking services closer to the people'. With other policies aimed at sedentarisation yielding undesirable results in the area, the central government has been particularly concerned with the pastoral nomadism of the Somalis and the continued insecurity in the area. It has been searching for indirect approaches that would make the Somali pastoralists settle voluntarily. Other reasons for increased seden-
tarisation include insecurity, impoverishment and relief food distribution. All these factors have negatively impacted on pastoralism by limiting the available rangelands for grazing. We will now present each of these issues and discuss their consequences for pastoralism in north-eastern Kenya.

Creation of settlements
The growth in settlements has been an on-going process since the 1940s. During the colonial period not all settlements were administrative centres as well. After 1945, more settlements developed, mainly for security and administrative reasons. The growth in the number of these centres during the late colonial period and the two decades immediately following independence has been moderate. Indeed, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that the growth in settlements increased substantially, with most being administrative centres.

The development of trading centres usually took place wherever there was a permanent water source. Thus, a number of settlements were encouraged through the grazing block project which created numerous boreholes and dams in the region. Once the initial process of settlement was finished, most centres grew in size following the droughts when the impoverished pastoralists moved in to receive famine relief or seek alternative sources of income. Before the 1990s, the process of settlement creation in most parts of North Eastern Province followed a predictable sequence which was well summarised by a joint report by Oxfam and the District Livestock Production Office in Wajir District:

The process of settlement starting has followed a similar pattern. A water source that can provide water through the dry season is created, whether it be a borehole or a few wells dug by individuals. A trader establishes a permanent base there to trade with pastoralists and is joined by others. The place is made a location/sub-location, a (sub) chief is appointed, a school constructed and other traders open shops. When drought comes, pastoralists come to the town in search of food relief. Those that are made destitute by the drought remain in the town with their few remaining livestock and survive on a mixture of livestock, sporadic famine relief and activities such as bringing firewood and construction materials to the town for sale. (Report by Oxfam and District Livestock Production Office, Wajir 1996: 10).

The process of formation of settlements in recent years has substantially deviated from the one described in that report. The most dramatic increase in settlements in the area has been witnessed in the 1990s, nearly all of which did not conform to the known norms in the evolution of settlements in the area. In the past, a settlement justified the need for an administrative centre such as location or sub-location. The recently established administrative centres however, were created in some areas which had no settlements, and the administrative centre was expected to lead to the establishment of a settlement.

Currently, all over the province, sites of pans and wells without any human settlements have been declared as administrative centres. Once such an administrative centre is created, a (sub) chief is appointed and sufficient pressure exerted on him (never her) to ensure that he settles people there quickly. In this case the appointment of a (sub-) chief provides the stimulus for starting the settlement rather than the existence of
the settlement justifying the need for the appointment of a (sub-)chief. This has led to the emergence of seasonal administrative centres where people only converge during droughts, and which remain deserted for the rest of the year. They also serve as relief food distribution centres at such times. The creation of these administrative centres is often done in the name of more efficient services to the people. Settlements have become islands of overgrazed deserts because of the concentration of a few animals for each of the households settled in the centre. These animals are confined to within about a five-kilometre radius of each centre, which results the settlements being overgrazed. Such centres are now so numerous that the area as a whole may soon be transformed into a huge desert. The settlements are mainly found in areas of better grazing since most pastoralists and their animals are necessarily concentrated in the more abundant areas of the region. Loss of the better grazing areas to settlement centres is a matter of concern to pastoralists.

From Figure 3.2, it can be seen that there was a rapid growth in administrative centres in the 1990s. The number of divisions in Garissa District increased by 42 per cent (from 7 to 10) over the thirty-year period from 1963 to 1993. But a similar increase of 40 per cent (from 10 to 14) was realised during the two-year period of 1993-1995 alone. The increase in the number of locations and sub-locations also followed a similar trend. The percentage growth in the number of locations was 29 per cent (1963-1983), 94 per cent (1983-1993) and 43 per cent (1993-1995). In the case of the sub-locations, the corresponding increases in number were 15 per cent, 50 per cent and 64 per cent respectively.

**Box 2: Administrative structure in Kenya**

To understand the discussion in the main text it is necessary to briefly describe the administrative structure in Kenya. The Kenyan Government is made up of various ministries which run all the departments and regulate the administration of parastatals. The Office of the President is considered as one of the ministries but it is the most powerful one and has the responsibility of regulating the general operation of all the public servants through the Head of the Civil Service and the Secretary to the Cabinet who is himself a Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President. The Provincial Administration also comes under the Office of the President. The country is divided into seven provinces and the Nairobi area. Each province is in turn divided into various districts. The district is then subdivided into divisions, locations and sub-locations. Thus, administrative centres are under the provincial administration of the Office of the President. The sub-location is lowest in the administrative hierarchy in the provincial administration. The sub-location is run by a sub-chief who is answerable to a chief in the location, who is in turn answerable to a district officer in the division. The DO is, in turn, answerable to the District Commissioner (DC). The DC then reports to the Provincial Commissioner (PC) who sits in the Provincial Headquarters and who reports to a Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President based in Nairobi. The provincial headquarters of North Eastern Province is Garissa town.
The following figure shows the growth in divisions, locations and sub-locations in Garissa District since independence:

**Figure 3.2**
Development of administrative units in Garissa District, 1963-1995

The growth in the number of administrative units at an increasing rate has significant implications for the pastoralists and their livestock enterprises, since it means a continued reduction in available grazing land. Although the administrative centres vary in size and may not be extensive, the sheer number of these centres in an area where land can only be utilised economically through extensive exploitation of the range has meant that the impact on pastoralists is considerable. Most settlements are administrative centres, although there are a few settlements that are not yet officially recognised as such. Each division, location and sub-location has an administrative centre. When the number of divisions, locations and sub-locations in Garissa District are combined as administrative centres for the same period, the result appears as in Figure 3.3.

It can be observed from Figure 3.3 that the increase in the number of administrative centres became more pronounced after 1989. From independence in 1963 to 1989 (a period of 26 years), the number of these administrative centres increased from 47 in 1963 to 57 in 1989 (21 per cent). However, from 1989 to 1995 (a period of only 6 years), the number increased from 57 in 1989 to 138 in 1995 (142 per cent). The increasing growth in the number of such centres is not unique to Garissa District but is also found in the other districts in North Eastern Province. Mandera District has experienced the highest increase in the number of centres in the region, followed by Wajir District. The details for
Figure 3.3
The number of administrative centres in Garissa District, 1963-1995

![Graph showing the number of administrative centres in Garissa District, 1963-1995.]

Source: Gok annual reports (various years)

Figure 3.4
Development of administrative centres in Wajir District, 1969-1996

![Graph showing the development of administrative centres in Wajir District, 1969-1996.]

Source: Oxfam/Livestock office, Wajir (joint report)
Wajir District are presented in Figure 3.4 and depicts the increase in the combined number of locations and sub-locations as administrative centres in the district during the period 1969 to 1996. It should be realised that the number of settlements is actually higher because of divisional headquarters and non-administrative settlements which are not included.

The increase in the number of locations and sub-locations in Wajir District has been most dramatic since 1993. While there was an increase in the number of administrative centres from 28 in 1969 to 35 in 1979 (25 per cent), and from 35 in 1979 to 63 in 1993 (80 per cent), the number more than doubled during the brief period from 1993-1996, from 63 to 170 (170 per cent). As we have mentioned elsewhere, the creation of new settlements in recent years and which is still continuing, does not conform to the processes followed by the centres which were created in the 1970s and early 1980s.7

Commenting on the effects of settlements in Kenyan pastoral areas, Keya (1991:74) contends that:

"The settlements have become centres of localized overgrazing and tree destruction. Development of permanent water sources in such human settlements has created permanently used rangelands, which have been so intensively utilized by livestock that they have become highly degraded landscapes devoid of vegetation cover. The settlements have thus become centres of man-made deserts spreading out in concentric circles, as is evident in the Rendille settlements of Kor and Kargi."

The following sketches serve to illustrate how the trading centres form concentric circles of overgrazing, thus continuously reducing the available grazing for pastoralists in the area. Map 3.1 shows the situation when there were only a few trading centres in the 1960s, while Map 3.2 represents the case after numerous centres were created in Garissa District in the 1990s.

During the years immediately after independence, there were only very few settlements in Garissa District and much of the land was available for use by pastoralists. The large tracts of land available for grazing enabled the Somali pastoralists in Garissa District to be nomadic, which had the dual benefit of environmental conservation and livestock improvement since the pastoralists would exploit new grazing areas whenever they needed to. Although the number of animals was larger then, the pastoralists contend that they were better off since there was enough grazing for all. However, they mention that the incidences of livestock disease were higher than today because of the formerly thick vegetation in the area which acted as a good breeding ground for a number of common diseases. With the increasing number of trading centres, especially since the mid-1990s, little grazing land remains for use by the pastoralists, as shown by the limited space available outside the concentric circles shown on Map 3.2.

The many new trading centres created in recent years tend to disenfranchise the pastoralists of their grazing land. Assuming the number of livestock in the area as having

---

7 The process of creating an administrative centre has been systematic and followed a recognisable pattern during the earlier years. The leading factor for the establishment of an administrative centre has been the need for a settled area being given a certain status so that it may facilitate the delivery of services to the inhabitants. However, the recent trends in the mushrooming administrative centres do not follow a recognised pattern.
Map 3.1 A sketch simulation of Garissa District with a few trading centres in the 1960s
Map 3.2 A sketch simulation of Garissa District after the creation of many new trading centres in the 1990s.
stayed constant, the remaining grazing area in the district is unlikely to be capable of supporting the same number of animals as before since a certain area has been degraded, most of which was part of the better grazing land of the district. Consequently, the Somali pastoralists from Garissa District, and indeed those from the rest of north-eastern Kenya, are increasingly moving into other territories such as Somalia and Ethiopia in search of pasture for their animals. Some of the recent conflicts (sometimes with loss of human life) between the Somali pastoralists and their neighbouring Boran tribesmen is attributable to diminishing available rangelands in many parts of northern Kenya.

The Kenyan government has never been comfortable with pastoral mobility, and particularly that in northern and north-eastern Kenya. This is mainly for historical reasons, and has its genesis in the secessionist campaign of the 1960s which culminated in the so-called shifita war of 1967. Since then, the sedentarisation of the pastoralists has been thought to be a good solution to the nomadic lifestyle of the Somali pastoralists in north-eastern Kenya as it would result in easier control of the pastoralists. The deliberate sedentarisation approach has also been observed by Bonfiglioli 1992:56 who points out that:

Planners have rarely understood the rationality of pastoral mobility as a strategy of resource utilisation and survival, and have always tried to change the lifestyle of nomadic populations through the sedentarisation on the pretext of offering better social services.

Political advancement by the elite, at both local and national levels, may be the most plausible explanation for the creation of the numerous settlements in the province, which in turn become islands of overgrazing and cause the permanent loss of that part of the rangelands to the pastoralists. Once a new location or sub-location is created, the different Somali clans compete against each other to secure the appointment of one of their own as the (sub-) chief with a view to establishing their own settlements to guarantee them continued access to the surrounding grazing lands. The (sub-) chiefs in turn put a great deal of effort into settling people, due to pressure from the district administration and also to secure their own appointments. The local political elite also capitalises on the existence of the different clans by trying to deliver the new centres to their own clans. The reality, however, is that they want their supporters to be settled so that they are available with their votes whenever they may be called upon during general elections. The political allegiance in which a community can only elect one of their own, whatever the person's qualities, is partly responsible for the emergence of numerous small and non-viable administrative centres all over north-eastern Kenya.

The reasons for the national government creating all these centres has very little to do with its stated arguments of service delivery. Indeed almost all the new administrative centres lack the basic amenities such as water, health centres, schools and adequate security. We would like to point out that since the inception of the District Focus for Rural Development Strategy the districts have been the local treasuries where both disbursements of funds and returns for funded projects are effected. Consequently, allocations from the central government to the provinces are influenced by the number of districts in the province since that is the level at which the funds are utilised. North
Eastern Province is the only region in the country where the number of districts has remained unchanged since independence. Although the allocation of resources cannot be the only factor for the creation of districts, it may be one of a number of factors used by the government to regulate regional development and resource allocation. If lack of development can be traced to low resource allocation from the central government, then the increase in the number of administrative centres without a parallel increase in the number of districts in north-eastern Kenya may be viewed with suspicion. Figure 3.5 shows the change in the number of districts in the seven provinces of Kenya since independence.8

While all the other provinces experienced an increase in the number of districts, especially since 1983 when the District Focus development strategy was adopted, North Eastern Province has remained unchanged in its number of districts since independence. It admittedly has the lowest population density in the country, but it is the second largest province, after Rift Valley Province, and its population is dispersed over a wide area. The figures for 1963 are missing for all the provinces, and the figures for 1993 are also missing for Rift Valley Province. Since 1993, the increases in the number of districts in the provinces have been as follows. Taking the figure for 1983 for Rift Valley, the number of districts increased from 13 to 18 (38 per cent); Eastern Province increased from 10 districts in 1993 to 11 districts in 1998 (10 per cent); Central Province had 5 districts in 1993 but increased to 7 districts in 1998 (40 per cent), North Eastern Province remained at 3 districts (no change); Western Province had 3 districts in 1993 which

---

Figure 3.5

Source: Kenya; National Development Plans (various years)

---

8 There are eight provinces in Kenya, including Nairobi. Nairobi has been omitted in this discussion because it is not sub-divided into any districts as is the case with the rest of the provinces.
increased to 8 districts by 1998 (167 per cent); Nyanza Province which had 6 districts in 1993 doubled the number to have 12 districts by 1998 (100 per cent) and Coast Province increased by 1 district from 6 in 1993 to 7 in 1998 (17 per cent).

The highest increase was recorded during the 1990s and most dramatically in Western, Nyanza, and Central Provinces. These three provinces have been the cradle of opposition politics in Kenya. Since the increases in the number of districts here coincide with the rebirth of multi-partyism in Kenya, the creation of new districts in the opposition zones was meant to serve two purposes: to lure the people back to the ruling party, and to reward some of the communities within these opposition areas by giving them their own districts in the hope that they would respond positively to the ruling political party. In addition, smaller communities living in the pre-dominantly opposition areas were told how they were 'minorities' and thus given their own districts so that they could support the government. North Eastern Province had no such change, and there was a minimal increase in the number of districts in Coast and Eastern Provinces. These areas were considered safe zones for the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), and therefore it felt no need to manipulate them by dividing the communities living in these areas through the creation of new districts. Ironically, the people living in Eastern, North Eastern and Coast Provinces are probably among the poorest in Kenya today. Whether the absence of new districts in these provinces and the poor economic status of the people is by default or by design would form an interesting and revealing study on its own.

In the absence of corresponding new districts, the numerous newly-created locations and sub-locations have to share the same allocation with those already existing in the district, making services more scarce and beyond the reach of most of the people in these centres. Indeed, many newly-created administrative centres are devoid of any services except for a few policemen, the (sub-) chief and a two-or three-room school made of mud and with temporary roofing. There are no services worth mentioning but these centres exert additional pressure on the meagre resources of the people since they are required to contribute to the construction and maintenance of all the facilities there. Thus, the argument of service delivery to the people of North Eastern Province is clearly unjustified. The driving force for the creation of the settlements in the area may be a combination of factors, the strongest of which is probably politics: to ease control of the Somali pastoralists, to contain insecurity and to ensure pools of votes during elections.

**Famine relief and insecurity**

Famine relief and insecurity are related in so far as those escaping from the marauding bandits often come to settle in the centres to benefit from relief food distribution. Some pastoralists lose their livestock to armed bandits after which they are forced into a life of destitution in these centres. Some who come to settle are merely attracted by the centre where they can sell the milk from their few remaining stock and purchase foodstuffs.

---

9 The first multi-party elections were held in the country in 1992, following the repeal of Section 2A which had since 1982 prohibited the formation of opposition parties and made the country a de jure one-party system.

10 Kenya has been ruled by only one political party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), since 1964.
Bonfiglioli 1992:20 observed that:

Everywhere, both in Western and in Eastern Africa, extensive nomadism is giving way to more and more sedentary pastoralism around settlements offering food relief, services and security, resulting in further environmental degradation around these settlements.

It is often mentioned that political security must be realised if food insecurity among pastoralists is to be avoided or redressed. However, political security is, in turn, dependent upon some level of economic development that will guarantee a stake for the pastoralists in the resulting secure environment in which they live. Clan conflicts and excesses of the state are the most threatening forms of insecurity in north-eastern Kenya today, and may continue to be so for a long time. Some of the well-publicised state excesses of force include the government massacres of 1980 in Garissa town, 1984 in Wagalla in Wajir District and a more recent one in 1998 in Bagalla in Wajir District. In each of these incidents, hundreds of lives were lost at the hands of the police and the armed forces in an effort to extort confessions from the local population. These particular incidents and many others of less severity have been reported extensively in the local press and in human rights reports such as those by Amnesty International and Africa Watch. Since they are considered by the government as 'scars' on its human rights record, details of the specifics of these events are difficult to come by. Such incidents have only contributed to further alienation of the people of northern Kenya from their government. Ironically, the people of North Eastern Province vote overwhelmingly for the KANU government during elections which has puzzled many of those familiar with the region's misery. However, if we consider the high level of illiteracy in the area and the increasing competition for the limited resources by different clans, it may be easier to understand their position. The Somalis, like many other pastoralists under similar circumstances, will not be allowed by their government to attain autonomy in the ownership and use of their resources. Besides, economic empowerment of the pastoralists is considered a threat to the political elite and will be resisted by those whose control over the pastoralists is bound to be weakened by their enhanced economic status. According to Toulmin (1991:33):

As far as pastoral tenure is concerned, any devolution of power to politically marginal pastoral groups is seen as very unlikely, as this would strengthen their autonomy, seen as a threat to central government power.

Thus the settlements will continue to attract impoverished pastoralists striving to eke out a living under difficult circumstances while benefiting from the periodic famine relief distributed by the government and charitable organisations, usually during periods of drought. Insecurity in northern and north-eastern Kenya has continued unabated for many years. Those entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring security may lack the will to do so, assuming that they have the necessary backing from the central government. Despite many security operations in the area, insecurity still persists and many lives — both of locals and of security officers — continue to be lost. The collapse of the Republic of Somalia resulted in the mass entry of refugees into the region bringing
with them sophisticated weaponry often more powerful than those used by the Kenyan security forces. An other reason for persistent insecurity in north-eastern Kenya may be political rationalisation for the continued lack of development in North Eastern Province. The key argument is that all the development funds intended for the region are being diverted for security and this has resulted in the lack of any tangible progress in the region. Similarly, the government maintains that it is not possible for any development to be undertaken in an environment of insecurity. Together these arguments tend to create justification for the lack of development in the area occupied by the Somali pastoralists.

Insecurity and land degradation have also been accelerated by the collapse of the Somalia state and the subsequent flow of hundreds of thousands of refugees into the region. Currently, there are about 126,000 refugees in North Eastern Province. The government has closed all the refugee camps in the country and transferred the refugees to camps in Dadaab in Garissa District in North Eastern Province and to the Kakuma camp in Turkana District, Rift Valley Province. This has provided the government with the justification for military activities and the continued use of funds in a never-ending security situation. Cases of police beatings and the maiming of local pastoralists are often reported in the local press. Many arms have found their way into the region from Somalia and, it is believed that some government officials have benefited from the situation. There appears to be a lack of moral commitment to contain the security situation effectively.

The presence of thousands of refugees in Garissa District has also caused environmental degradation of monumental proportions. Not only have the camps taken up expansive tracts of land, but the thousands of families in the camps also have to find woodfuel for cooking. This has resulted in large expanses of land being cleared of both dry wood and live trees when dry-wood supplies have become exhausted. Some non-governmental organisations assisting the refugees have contracted other organisations and groups of people to collect firewood for the refugees in exchange for payment. Since dry wood has been exhausted in the area, live wood is now being cut down left to dry and collected a few days later. In addition to the degradation as a result of the demand for firewood, many trees were also cut down to provide heavy fencing for protection for the refugee camps. The combined effect of this harvesting has been the emergence of a heavily degraded environment in the area occupied by the refugee camps and nearby. Some areas away as far as Wajir District and the Republic of Somalia.

Summary of findings

Throughout colonial as well as post-colonial Kenya, the policies that were formulated for pastoralists were often inappropriate or ill-advised. Most of these policies had two key underpinnings: the sedentarisation of the pastoralists, and the control of overstocking and overgrazing. Most of the policies designed during the colonial period had only limited success. However, the independent Kenyan government introduced further policies supposedly aimed at improving the condition of the pastoralists in the Arid and Semi-Arid

---

11 For example, Daily Nation, 22.10.98, page 3; entitled, 'Police raze villages in Garissa'.
Lands (Asals), including the creation of an exclusive ministry to bring all such projects under one administrative control. However the ministry was soon dissolved with the interests of pastoralists being shuttled from one ministry or government department to another over the years.

It is to be noted that many of these projects became white elephants and did little to improve the welfare of the target population because they were designed without the necessary input from future potential beneficiaries. In addition, the introduction of multi-party politics saw a renewed move to create new districts and trading centres in many parts of Kenya, either to reward loyalists or to sedentarise pastoralists for better and easier control. While the creation of any new district would mean additional budget allocation under the District Focus strategy for development, the same cannot be said of new locations or sub-locations which had only to share the previously available budgetary allocation for the district in which they were located. The number of districts in North Eastern Province has not changed since independence, while all the other provinces have had some new districts created since 1963.

North Eastern Province had more than its share of new locations and sub-locations but the new settlements have meant the emergence of islands of overgrazing and considerable environmental degradation. These, coupled with intensive degradation from the refugee camps in the region, has meant a reduction in the land available for grazing livestock. Insecurity, both real and perceived, continues to consume the meagre funds available for the region's development. Most of the settled centres have also become centres of relief food distribution, thus accelerating the growth of the centres and compounding the problem of land degradation and the resultant reduction in grazing land. The high number of refugees in Garissa District has also contributed to increased insecurity in the area, while being responsible for a great deal of environmental degradation too.