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# The Promise of Payday

Exploring the role of state cash transfers  
in post-apartheid rural South Africa

STEFAN GRANLUND



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Stefan Granlund

*Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences  
Department of Urban and Rural Development  
Uppsala*

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Cover: Illustration of grant payday in Cutwini, made by Anna Bulman at [picturehumanrights.org](http://picturehumanrights.org).

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## Abstract

During the last two decades, cash transfer programs have become a significant tool across low and middle-income countries in efforts to reduce poverty. However, there is a paucity of studies on beneficiaries' own perspectives and lived experiences of cash transfers as well as potential long-term productive effects on livelihoods.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the material and socio-relational implications of state cash transfers for impoverished populations in rural South Africa in a changing livelihood context, using the Child Support Grant (CSG) as case. The CSG is an unconditional cash transfer to improve child wellbeing for households living in poverty. Material and social-relational implications of the grant are explored through combining household surveys with all (273) households in two rural villages in the Eastern Cape Province with interviews and observations. The surveys, conducted in 2016, followed up a previous similar survey from 2002, which was before the CSG reached these villages. Drawing on literature on cash transfers, livelihoods, and social justice theory, including the two interlinked concepts of redistribution and recognition, the study points to the importance of both material and symbolic redistribution in strengthening livelihoods and social justice.

The thesis reveals that in a context of rising unemployment and declining cultivation in the two villages, social grants have both protective and productive effects on livelihoods. The results show how the recipients used the CSG strategically for making small improvements to their livelihoods over time. The study also shows that the CSG has strengthened women's autonomy and dignity and has reduced gender inequalities at household level. However, the CSG did not lead to significant improvements that could eradicate poverty in the long term.

This thesis further studies state-citizen relations and the contentious character of social grants in rural South Africa. There is a growing sense of entitlement to the CSG among recipients, while sentiments of grants being a form of charity exists simultaneously. The thesis concludes that the encounters with state bureaucracy primarily are avenues where CSG recipients see the state, enact a form of agency and gain recognition, which contributes to a sense of citizenship. In conclusion, the CSG is not simply an economic transfer of cash, which keeps individuals in households and communities afloat, it also becomes part of, and reshapes, social relations. The potential for recipients to gain recognition of their status as citizens is an important symbolic implication of social grants.

*Keywords:* Cash transfers, livelihoods, Child Support Grant, redistribution, recognition, social justice, South Africa.

*Author's address:* Stefan Granlund, SLU, Department of Urban and Rural Development, P.O. Box 7012, 750 07 Uppsala, Sweden.

# The Promise of Payday. Exploring the role of state cash transfers in post-apartheid rural South Africa

## Abstract

Under de senaste två decennierna har sociala trygghetssystem såsom kontantstöd blivit ett viktigt verktyg i låg- och medelinkomstländer för att minska fattigdom. Det finns emellertid få studier av bidragsmottagarnas egna perspektiv och upplevda erfarenheter av kontantstöd samt potentiella långsiktiga effekter på hushållsförsörjningen.

Syftet med denna avhandling är att utforska de materiella och socio-relationella innebörderna av statliga sociala trygghetssystem såsom barnbidraget för människor som lever i fattigdom på landsbygden i Sydafrika i tider av stor arbetslöshet och minskat småskaligt jordbruk. Det sydafrikanska barnbidraget är ett ovillkorat kontantstöd för att förbättra barns välbefinnande för hushåll som lever i fattigdom. Materiella och socio-relationella konsekvenser av bidraget undersöks genom att kombinera hushållsundersökningar med alla (273) hushåll i två byar i östra Kapprovinsen med intervjuer och observationer. Undersökningarna, som genomfördes 2016, följde upp en tidigare liknande undersökning från 2002, vilket var innan barnbidraget nådde dessa byar. Studien bygger på litteratur om kontantstöd i utvecklingsområden, försörjningsmöjligheter på landsbygden och rättviseteori, inklusive de två sammankopplade begreppen omfördelning och erkännande.

Avhandlingen visar på att trygghetssystemen har både skyddande och produktiva effekter på försörjningen i ett sammanhang av ökande arbetslöshet och minskande odling i de två byarna. Resultaten visar hur mottagarna använde barnbidraget strategiskt för att göra små förbättringar av deras försörjning över tid. Studien visar också att barnbidraget har stärkt kvinnors egenmakt och känsla av värdighet och bidragit till mindre ojämlikheter mellan könen på hushållsnivå. Barnbidraget ledde emellertid inte till betydande förbättringar som kan sägas lyfta hushållen ur fattigdom på lång sikt och kontantstöd allena kan inte substantiellt förändra ojämsställda maktförhållanden mellan könen.

Denna avhandling diskuterar vidare de komplexa förhållandena mellan medborgare och stat. Barnbidraget ses mer och mer som en rättighet av mottagarna, samtidigt som känslan av att bidraget är en form av välgörenhet också existerar. Mottagarna av barnbidraget upplever ofta ett stigmatiserande bemötande, både av statliga tjänstemän men också i samhället i stort. En slutsats i avhandlingen är dock att bidragstagarnas möten med den statliga byråkratin främst utgör tillfällen då de blir sedda och får en form av erkännande, vilket bidrar till en känsla av medborgarskap. Sammanfattningsvis visar avhandlingen att barnbidraget inte bara är en ekonomisk transferering av kontanter som hjälper hushåll med försörjningen, utan de blir också en del av, och omformar, sociala relationer.

*Nyckelord:* Kontantstöd, försörjningsmöjligheter, barnbidrag, omfördelning, erkännande, social rättvisa, Sydafrika.

*Författarens adress:* Stefan Granlund, SLU, Institutionen för stad och land, Box 7012, 750 07 Uppsala, Sverige.

## Dedication

To Tessa Hochfeld. A brilliant academic, feminist, and social justice advocate, but also such a warm and caring person that helped sharpen this research. You will be missed.



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## List of publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

- I Flora Hajdu, David Neves & Stefan Granlund (2020). Changing livelihoods in the Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002–2016): Diminishing employment and expanding social protection. Accepted by *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Forthcoming, planned vol. 46, no. 4 (August 2020).
- II Flora Hajdu, Stefan Granlund, David Neves, Tessa Hochfeld, Franklin Amaukwa-Mensah & Emil Sandström (2019). Cash transfers for sustainable rural livelihoods? Examining the long-term productive effects of the Child Support Grant in South Africa. Under review at *World Development Perspectives*.
- III Stefan Granlund & Tessa Hochfeld (2019). ‘That Child Support Grant gives me powers’: Exploring social and relational aspects of cash transfers in South Africa in times of livelihood change. *Journal of Development Studies*, online: doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1650170.
- IV Stefan Granlund (2020). ”They are not leaving without their money”: Exploring encounters with the state through cash transfers in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Manuscript*.

Papers I & III are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.

The contribution to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

- I I was third author of this paper. The idea for the paper was conceived by Hajdu, but I also contributed to the design of the paper. I collected the data, contributed to the text and gave comments on several rounds of the paper.
- II I was second author of this paper. The paper was conceptually designed by Hajdu when applying for the collaborative project. I collected the data and wrote most of the literature review in collaboration with Hajdu. I gave comments on several rounds of the paper.
- III I was first author of this paper. I developed the conceptual idea for the paper. I collected the data, and analyzed it in collaboration with Hochfeld. I wrote the majority of the text with feedback from Hochfeld.
- IV I am the sole author of the paper, and collected the data, analyzed it and wrote the paper.

## Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
ASGISA EC	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, Eastern Cape
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CPS	Cash Paymaster Services
CSG	Child Support Grant
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MFPP	Massive Food Production Programme
OAP	Old Age Pension
SASSA	South Africa Social Security Agency
SMG	State Maintenance Grant
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



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If not otherwise stated, all photos are author's own.

# 1 Introduction

Through much of the twentieth century, they [the villages in the Lusikisiki area] constituted home ground, a way of life to defend and cherish, the site of a rearguard battle against a corrosive economic order. The men may have spent much of the year away from home at the gold mines, but they did so to gather the resources that nourished a way of life back home. In the villages of Lusikisiki, they were proprietors of peasant homesteads and they were patriarchs. This sense of command and continuity made up the kernel of their identities. [...] It is a cruel irony that by the time apartheid was defeated and the Transkei incorporated into a democratic South Africa, the twin foundations of this world—work in the gold mines and a peasant economy at home—were both in a state of irreversible decline. Jonny Steinberg, *Three Letter Plague* (2008:6–7)

Jonny Steinberg's book *Three Letter Plague* (2008) eloquently captures life in Pondoland in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa, the site of my own ethnographic explorations. The book explores the reluctance of a young man to test himself for HIV during a devastating pandemic. However, twelve years after the publication of *Three Letter Plague*, it is not the pandemic that is the *most* pressing problem for rural villagers in Pondoland. It is rather the continuous fading of 'the twin foundations of this world', wage labour and a peasant economy. In its place, another 'foundation' has been growing in importance, the reliance *on*, the pressure *on*, the sometimes nervous waiting *for*, and the claiming *of*, an emerging welfare system.

## 1.1 Payday: A note on the research journey

Cars and trucks are starting to fill up the narrow dirt road in the village of Cutwini. Some carry chickens in the back to sell and some are there to collect money for funeral services. The minibus taxis are lined up and on standby ready to go to the nearest town and back with people who want to buy groceries and

other necessities. The village dogs are also on standby as they are picking up on the smell of freshly cooked *boerewors* (South African sausages). A few tents are raised for the scorching sun and alongside the road heaps of blankets and plates are laid out with fruits, vegetables, hot food and clothes ready to be sold. For a village of this size, the road is packed with people. By all accounts, this does not represent just another day in this village. It is March 2016 and I am observing the monthly payday of social grants in the rural village of Cutwini in Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Cutwini is a remote rural village located close to the Indian Ocean, about 25 kilometres from the nearest town of Lusikisiki. I have been here a few weeks living in the village to do a household survey on livelihood activities in the village with a particular focus on the effects of the Child Support Grant (CSG), a state cash transfer (or social grant). Needless to say, I was interested in being present on the day the Child Support Grant and other social grants arrived at the village. This happens through the arrival of three cars: a mobile cash dispenser (ATM-car) where beneficiaries collect the money, accompanied by a car of armoured guards for security and a car from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) that takes care of questions and complaints.

In the middle of the village, the ATM-car stops and villagers start lining up in queues to collect their grants. There are two queues, one on each side of the car, one for pensioners who collect the old age grant and one for caregivers of children who collect Child Support Grants. It is predominantly women in both queues, and the same goes for those selling clothes and food (see photo 1). Bongani (my interpreter) and I join the payday market just up the road next to the queueing and causally talk to the villagers about the household survey we are doing. Compared to a normal day where Cutwini is rather calm and quiet, where you mainly see vast fields flowing down to the cliffs of the Indian Ocean, it is now bristling with life. Many, if not most, people in the village go to the payday market, even those who are not collecting their grant. On grant payday, the atmosphere is relaxed and joyful. This monthly payday creates a meeting place for villagers to talk and interact, it creates a marketplace for those who intend to sell or buy goods without having to pay for travel to the nearest town and compete with the sellers there (see photo 2a, b). It is a convenient way of collecting one's social grant without the hassle of having to queue up in town, especially for pensioners.

When witnessing the payday in comparison to a normal day in the village I start to think about the role this money plays in different ways: How do these social grants affect social relations in the village? What does the CSG mean for the women who predominantly collect them? What do social grants mean for state-citizen relations, for seeing and being seen by the state? Do they see

social grants in terms of entitlements or as charity? Thus, observing and partaking in the payday, the general atmosphere of the day, and the activities surrounding it, made me decide to focus parts of my research on the social effects of grants and how grants affect and shape state-citizen relations. What started out as a follow-up study of the material livelihood effects of cash transfers developed further into also including an exploration of the social and relational implications of cash transfers, and of different lived experiences and of encounters with the state.

## 1.2 The rise of cash transfers in low and middle income countries

While marginal in status until around two decades ago, cash transfer programs have become a significant tool across low and middle-income countries in efforts to reduce poverty, food insecurity and other life-cycle risks (e.g. old age) of impoverished populations. There exists a variety of cash transfer programs across the world with differences in design, targeted populations and ownership (state or non-state), which suggests a non-uniform trend but nevertheless represents a shift in thinking with regards to poverty reduction (Devereux, 2013; Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018; Leisering, 2019; De Haan, 2014).

Cash transfers in low- and middle income countries have ranged from minimalist ‘safety nets’ (targeted social protection to the poorest or those deemed ‘deserving’ and ‘needy’) promoted by the World Bank as a response to economic crises since the 1990s, to calls for more comprehensive social welfare programs in the 2000s (Kabeer, 2014). These minimalist approaches are increasingly challenged by authors who emphasize the importance of rights-based approaches that could improve the social contract between state and citizen (Hickey, 2011), and more comprehensive universal social protection systems with “governance systems that are accountable and responsive to poorer as well as wealthier citizen, and an approach to development that is grounded in social justice” (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2008:92; Hickey, 2014).

The question of universal versus targeted (residual) approaches to social protection represents a source of debate not just for domestic politics but also international social policy (Mkandawire, 2005). The long-standing divide and tension between these two approaches can be seen as uncovering ‘contrasting worldviews’ between normative arguments on social justice on the one hand and more market-friendly arguments around incentives, and cost-benefit calculus (efficient use of limited resources) on the other (Kabeer, 2014). However, it is important to stress that the differences between the approaches are, in reality,

not as clear-cut and countries often operate on a continuum between the two approaches (Kabeer, 2014). In the case of South Africa, social grants are claimable entitlements for eligible citizens under a generous means test, resulting in a widespread uptake (in the eligible categories) in poor communities such as rural Eastern Cape. At the same time, they are also targeted to the poor and those deemed ‘needy’ or ‘deserving’ of support (Kabeer, 2014). While social protection is broader than just cash transfers (also known as social assistance), including social insurance and public employment schemes, this thesis focuses on the social assistance part of social protection, meaning the directly redistributive cash transfers.

Although the design of cash transfer programs remains contested and debated (Kabeer, 2014), the rise of these programs across the global South has been substantial the last two decades (De Haan, 2014; Leisering, 2019), as has the research interest into its effects. However, much of the literature studying the impacts of cash transfers in the global South relies mainly on quantitative measures (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). There is a paucity of micro-level qualitative research on beneficiaries’ own perspectives on both the material and social impacts of cash transfers (Patel & Ulriksen, 2017). The importance of qualitative research has been pointed out by the first anthropological cross-comparative study on cash transfers, which highlights the importance of careful consideration of contexts when assessing cash transfer effects (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018). Knowledge gaps have also been identified in relation to a) beneficiaries’ own perspectives on whether and how cash transfers affect their livelihoods, b) studies on how cash transfers affect opportunities in engaging in social networks, risk sharing and economic collaboration and c) the gendered nature of livelihood impacts of cash transfers (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). This thesis aims to contribute to filling all the above knowledge gaps.

### 1.3 Cash transfers as part of an emerging South African welfare state

In South Africa, state cash transfers, in the form of social grants, have a long tradition and are a ‘proactive social policy’ with welfare state rhetoric rather than a temporary development trend (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018:2, 5). The exceptional character of the South African social grants system sets it apart from many other African countries in that social grants are a constitutionally protected right and are fully funded by domestic taxation (Devereux, 2011; Seekings & Nattrass, 2015). The Child Support Grant (CSG) was introduced in 1998 and is the largest cash transfer in South Africa in terms of coverage. In 2019, the CSG scheme reached over 12.4 million beneficiaries with a sum of R420 (roughly 27

euro) per month/child (SASSA, 2019). The CSG is paid out regularly each month to the primary caregiver of children under the age of 18 under a means test (Seekings & Natrass, 2015).

From the onset of the first democratic elections in 1994, the promise of a 'better life for all' and dignity for the previously discriminated against after decades of liberation struggles under apartheid was the political framing under which the African National Congress (ANC) came to power (Dubbeld, 2017). A new Constitution was adopted in 1996 in which the preamble stated that it was to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights" (Liebenberg, 2007:178). In particular, South Africans had high expectations of the state as a guarantor of social and economic rights (Plagerson *et al.*, 2012).

The emerging South African welfare system, primarily through the introduction and expansion of social grants to impoverished populations, has however been much maligned in public discourse in South Africa over the years (Hassim, 2006; Marais, 2011). As Hochfeld (2015) notes, there is virulent anti-welfare attitudes where social grant beneficiaries, primarily those with Child Support Grants, are widely out of favour in society, often experiencing denigrating allegations in media or from politicians (Hassim, 2006; Marais, 2011; Wright *et al.*, 2015). However, social grants have also been described as one of the main tools for socio-economic development in democratic South Africa (Patel, 2015; Hassim, 2006) but have in recent years also been the subject of a national crisis in grant payment which threatened the livelihoods of large portion of South Africans (see chapter 2).

Under present conditions of mass-unemployment, jobless growth and declining reliance on agricultural livelihoods, social grants often become a dominant source of income in rural households. As the description of payday above suggests, grants are a very important part of livelihoods in poor, rural areas in South Africa, especially in the so called former 'homelands' suffering from historically racialized structural underdevelopment (Neves, 2017). While the immediate positive impacts of social grants on poverty and child wellbeing have been adequately researched and proven (DSD, SASSA, UNICEF, 2011, 2012; Patel, 2012, 2015), there have been fewer studies of potential long-term productive effects on livelihoods and wider social-relational implications for beneficiaries. This thesis combines a qualitatively rich follow-up household survey with qualitative interviews and ethnographic methods to explore both long-term livelihood effects as well as various aspects of lived experiences in relation to social grants in two villages in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa.

The thesis attempts to speak to and between several academic fields: the social protection/social policy literature (Devereux & McGregor, 2014;

Plageron *et al.*, 2012) (including impact evaluation research, Davis *et al.*, 2016); the burgeoning anthropological literature cash transfers (Ferguson, 2015; Olivier de Sardan, 2018); as well as traditional rural livelihood studies, especially the rich literature on livelihoods in the Eastern Cape discussed in detail in Paper I. This combination of a more quantitative follow-up study together with a qualitative approach (interviews and observations) provides a deep and rich understanding of cash transfers in rural South Africa.

## 1.4 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is *to explore the material and socio-relational implications of state cash transfers for impoverished populations in rural South Africa in a changing livelihood context*. In particular, this is explored through the case of the Child Support Grant (CSG) in two villages in rural Eastern Cape. The four different papers that this thesis is comprised of all contribute to the overarching aim through different steps and levels of analysis. It is important to first have a solid understanding of the long-term rural livelihood changes that have taken place in these villages (Paper I) in order to explore the material livelihood effects of the CSG (Paper II). The analysis then shifts to the lived experiences and perspectives of CSG-beneficiaries: the social and relational implications of the CSG at individual, household and community levels (Paper III), and finally, the implications on state-citizen relationships (Paper IV). Each paper (while individually separate in its scope of analysis) therefore builds on the other to answer the overarching aim. The following sub-questions are consequently addressed:

- How have rural livelihoods changed in the study sites between 2002–2016 and in what ways has the CSG contributed to long-term effects on rural livelihoods?
- What are the social and relational effects of the CSG at individual, household, community levels?
- In what ways do encounters with the state through the CSG affect state-citizen relationships, including recipients' notions of entitlements to the grant?

The papers in this thesis contribute to addressing the aforementioned research gaps by firstly providing insights into the potential long-term productive effects of cash transfers on rural livelihoods, and secondly, adding qualitative insights into the (gendered) socio-relational implications of cash transfers on rural people's lives.

While acknowledging the exceptional character of the South African social security system (Devereux, 2011) compared to much of sub-Saharan Africa,

South Africa “provides an ideal case study, for it presents a conundrum that foreshadows where much of the rest of the world may end up” (Hickel, 2016:211). The combination of the fading of the ‘twin foundations’, i.e. the lack of jobs for the masses, together with the long ongoing processes of agrarian decline provides an interesting vantage point from which to think about the role of state cash transfers in attempts to advance social justice in times of insecure livelihoods.

## 1.5 Outline of the thesis

The papers on which this thesis is based are presented as Paper I–IV at the back of the thesis. The following chapters in this ‘cover story’ place the papers in a broader context and expand on concepts and the empirical work in greater detail than permitted in the papers in scientific journals. Chapter 2 provides a short introduction to the research project, a background and historical context to the system of social grants in South Africa and a description of the two rural field sites and the contextual specificities of rural Eastern Cape, as well as an in-depth description of social grants in the study villages. Therefore, Chapter 3 discusses the relevant literature on cash transfers in development contexts and the previous studies on rural livelihoods in the Eastern Cape. Concepts used to explore both the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in a rural setting are introduced and discussed. Following from the conceptual framework, I outline the methodology used in this thesis in chapter 4, describing the research design, and the combination of methods used to answer the research questions. The methodology also contains a reflexive discussion on the role of the researcher and on the use of interpreters. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the results from Paper I–IV, while Chapter 6 discusses the results and draws general conclusions, answering the aim and research questions.



## 2 Background and context

This thesis is part of a Formas<sup>1</sup>-funded collaborative research project<sup>2</sup>, which aims to explore the potential of cash transfers to produce long-term livelihood effects in poor rural areas in the global South, through exploring the effects of 14 years (2002–2016) of Child Support Grants (CSG) in two rural villages in South Africa. Exploring the long-term effects of cash transfers in these two villages is possible due to the existence of unique household survey data from all households in both villages from 2002 (Hajdu, 2006). The objective of the collaborative project was to return to the villages in 2016 and conduct a follow-up household survey, similar to the one from 2002, in all 273 households<sup>3</sup>. The household survey aimed to explore changes in livelihood activities over the two years, as well as the long-term effects of the CSG, which had been introduced in these particular villages only after the first survey in 2002. In addition to the household survey, more in-depth qualitative research involving interviews and ethnographic observations was used to explore the lived experiences of CSG-recipients and their perceptions of the grants. In this mixed methods design, my role was to live in the villages for extended periods between 2016–2018, participating in daily local life and making continuous ethnographic observations, while conducting first the survey together with local assistants (2016), and later the interviews (2017–18) (for more details, see methodology

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<sup>1</sup> Research council for sustainable development, one of Sweden's main research funding bodies: [www.formas.se/en/](http://www.formas.se/en/).

<sup>2</sup> The principal investigator of this project was Flora Hajdu, who is also my main supervisor. Other co-investigators in the project, who are also co-authors on some of the papers and acted as co-supervisors, were Tessa Hochfeld at the Centre for Social Development at University of Johannesburg, South Africa; David Neves at the Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at University of Western Cape, South Africa and Emil Sandström, also at Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

<sup>3</sup> There were 146/87 households in Cutwini/Manteku respectively in 2002, this had grown to 174/99 households in 2016.

section). I thus collected all the field data (guided by discussions with the other research participants). While the survey data was analysed and developed into Paper I and II with the other participants in the collaborative project, I conceptually designed Paper III and IV on social and relational implications of the grants. Living in the villages for several months during the first household survey phase allowed me to observe important events, such as grant payday, and discuss many different issues surrounding the grants with local informants, all of which was very helpful in guiding the development of Paper III and IV. I chose to work with interviews and ethnographic observations to answer the research questions identified for these two papers, and they were eventually written up by me as first and single author respectively.

## 2.1 Social grants in South Africa

South Africa has a relatively comprehensive social security system, with seven different social grants (publicly financed, non-contributory, regular, and unconditional benefits in cash to citizens, under a means test, in order to address those living in poverty) paid to a total of around 17.8 million people in 2020, roughly 30% of the whole population. Although 17.8 million are direct beneficiaries, there are roughly 10 million recipients, due to some recipients receiving grants for multiple beneficiaries (e.g. two or more children within the household) (Torkelson, 2020; SASSA 2019). According to Statistics South Africa, social grants are the main source of income in 20% of households nationally and in the Eastern Cape Province, social grants were the main source of income in 35% of households (StatsSA, 2019).

The existing social grants are the Child Support Grant (12.4 million), the Old Age Pension (also known as the Old Age Grant, 3.4 million), the Disability Grant (1 million), the Foster Care Grant (430 000), the Care Dependency Grant (148 000), the Grant-in-aid (140 000), and lastly War Veterans Grant (124) (SASSA 2018). The amounts paid to recipients are R1780/month for the Old Age Pension (for people over 60 years old), the Disability Grant, Care Dependency Grant and War Veterans Grant, R920/month for the Foster Care Grant, and R420 per child/month to the primary care giver for the Child Support Grant and the same amount for the Grant-in-aid (SASSA, 2018; Torkelson, 2020).

Since 2006, the social grants have been administered by a single government agency, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). Social grants are an explicit manifestation of a constitutionally protected and progressively realized right to social security delivered by the state (R.S.A., 1996). Claiming the grant does not depend on political affiliation or any conditional behaviours. The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) derives its mandate from

the Constitution under section 27, which states that “Everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance”<sup>4</sup>.

South Africa, with its history of a large settled European population during the colonial period, has a long history of social welfare programmes. (Seekings & Natrass, 2015). Already in 1928, the first non-contributory Old Age Pension was introduced, however only to the part of the poor population deemed as ‘white’ and ‘coloured’. During the apartheid regime from 1948 onwards, Old Age Pensions were expanded to the rest of the population, however the sums differed significantly by race. In the 1990s, payments were eventually equalized with regards to race and during post-apartheid, the system has been expanded to include several new types of grants (Devereux, 2011; Woolard *et al.*, 2011, Lund 2008).

In 1998, the Child Support Grant was introduced through the phasing out of the previous State Maintenance Grant (SMG), a grant for children in poor households that was not available in the former ‘homelands’ of Eastern Cape during apartheid<sup>5</sup>. The new Child Support Grant therefore entailed a deracialization of a previously racially skewed social security system, and a marked attempt to redistribute and redirect social spending towards the African black population. In particular, towards rural households living in poverty with children, as a way of addressing child well-being and nutrition (Lund, 2008; Zembe-Mkabile *et al.*, 2018). The sum of the CSG, however, was set much lower than the previous SMG, but instead reached significantly more people in post-apartheid South Africa (Lund, 2008).

The CSG is an unconditional grant<sup>6</sup>, but it is means tested, meaning that the recipient have to earn under ten times the amount of the grant per month in order to be eligible, in addition to being the primary caregiver of a child. Many children in South Africa are raised away from their biological parents due to expansive kinship structures, the detrimental effects of AIDS and the legacy of migratory labour (Budlender & Lund, 2011). The CSG was therefore designed to ‘follow the child’ through targeting the primary caregiver, instead of targeting biological parents specifically (Lund, 2008). Although the primary caregiver of

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<sup>4</sup> Section 27 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996: <http://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-1>.

<sup>5</sup> Most of the beneficiaries of the SMG were poor Indian and coloured (mixed race) families (Lund, 2008; Seekings & Natrass, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Although a ‘soft condition’ was introduced in 2011 that required school attendance which was criticised as South Africa does not have a problem of school attendance (Lund, 2011), in the rural field sites in this thesis, this ‘soft condition’ is not enforced, making the CSG “effectively” unconditional.

the child can potentially be a man, the Child Support Grant is, in concert with the strongly gendered nature of care in South Africa, received almost exclusively by women (Lund, 2008; Devereux, 2011).

The 2000s saw a massive increase in uptake of CSG as the age eligibility of the grant was successively increased, including efforts made to expand the distribution in remote rural areas. Between 2002 and 2010, the increase of beneficiaries of the CSG rose from around two million to ten million. The age eligibility was extended to 18 years in 2012 (Seekings & Nattrass, 2015), which remains the cut-off point as of 2020.

While most recipients of the CSG are women, the *primary* objective in the late 1990s was not to redistribute resources into the hands of women from a gender equality perspective. As one of the primary architects of the CSG Francie Lund notes, after the first democratic elections in 1994, “race and poverty trumped gender” as to what was driving policy (Lund, 2008:115–116). However, although it was not marketed as such, targeting the primary caregiver was simultaneously a strategy in favour of women (Lund, 2008).

South Africa’s social grant system has seen major upheaval, controversy and crisis in recent years (Torkelson, 2020). The ability to deliver social grants, state cash transfers, to millions of impoverished households was in jeopardy during a crisis within the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in 2017 (Du Toit, 2017; Torkelson, 2020). The background of this crisis, was initiated in 2012, when SASSA awarded a tender to Cash Paymaster Services (CPS), a private bank using biometric (authentication by fingerprint) technology, to deliver social grants. The Constitutional Court, however, declared that tender invalid in 2013 due to tender irregularities but did not cancel the contract in order not to interrupt the payment of social grants to millions of beneficiaries. In 2014, the Constitutional Court ruled that SASSA should put out a new tender to find a new service provider. Instead, SASSA declared their intention to take over the payment of social grants themselves rather than using a private third party provider, at the latest in 2017 when the then current smart cards (used to access the money) were going to expire. SASSA however made little progress to show the Constitutional Court that they could take over the payments themselves by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017. A massive public outcry of protests through civil society and the media in 2017 forced the Constitutional Court of South Africa to interfere with the government’s inaction to secure the delivery of social grants (Torkelson, 2020). A new Constitutional Court order then averted a crisis by extending the previously invalid contract by one year for the transition of service delivery implementers from CPS to the state-owned Post Office (Breckenridge 2018). In 2018, the South African Post Office took over the grant payment system.

The SASSA crisis is important to mention here as it took place during fieldwork in rural Eastern Cape and have primarily shaped Paper IV. I have used interview material and observations from before, during and after the crisis to explore different encounters with the state and recipients' notions of entitlements to receiving a social grant in light of a severe and concrete risk of not receiving grants.

The processes of in-sourcing of social grants payments from a private bank to the state-owned South Africa Post Office (including issuing new electronic cards) had several positive aspects including the potential to stop problematic issues, such as predatory private companies offering services and loans through direct deductions from recipients accounts. Such deductions have been heavily criticised for being difficult to stop and even sometimes completely unauthorized. This had long been a source of complaints from South African civil society organisation Black Sash under the campaign "Hands off our grants". Although problems remain, for the most part, the transition to the Post Office have led to improvements in this regard (Torkelson, 2020).

## 2.2 Description of the field sites

Cutwini and Manteku are rural villages located close to the Indian Ocean in the Pondoland region in the North-Eastern parts of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The rural former 'homelands' of Eastern Cape are some of the poorest regions in South Africa due to the legacy of apartheid, with a history of racialized structural underdevelopment, with relatively poor quality education and poor service delivery (Shackleton *et al.*, 2015). The villages lie in the former 'homeland' of Transkei (1976–1994), a nominally independent homeland for 'native' black Africans created by the apartheid regime. Former homelands like Transkei in South Africa were heavily dependent on the wider South African economy through primarily mining-led industrialisation that pulled rural men into circuits of migratory labour (Wolpe, 1972; Bundy, 1988).

The local economy of the former 'homeland' Transkei was largely dependent on and characterized by remittances from male migratory labour in formal employment during apartheid (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). The demand for cheap, low-skilled African labour servicing the South African economy declined from the 1970s and onwards into post-apartheid times (Black & Gerwel, 2014; Neves & Du Toit, 2013). Both villages experience structural unemployment today on a large scale, which is similar to much of the rural Eastern Cape. More lucrative public or private sector work is in Cutwini and Manteku available only for a few households, while most of the working-age population have to contend occasional opportunities for piece jobs or temporary public employment

schemes. This affects levels of formal social insurance, which is lacking for most impoverished households in these villages. South Africa, compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, also has a relatively small informal sector (Du Toit & Neves, 2014) and this is true of these field sites as well, where only a few households have small informal businesses that they can live off. Livelihoods in these villages is the main topic of Paper I and is described in greater detail in the results from that paper, but it can be briefly mentioned here that we found that since 2002 employment had dwindled in both villages, but especially in Manteku, and had been replaced by social grants in importance.

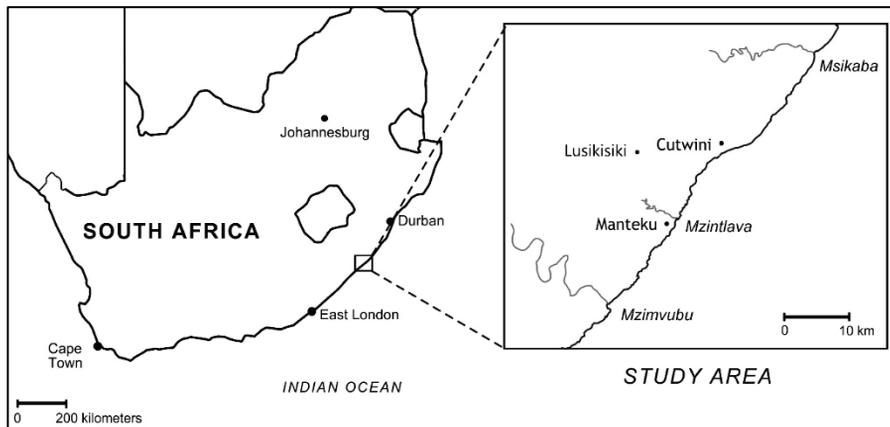


Figure 1: Map of South Africa, with the location of the two case study villages, Cutwini and Manteku, marked.

Electricity has been available in both Cutwini and Manteku since around 2012, but water has to be collected in private rainwater tanks or fetched by hand from springs (Cutwini) or large communal tanks (Manteku). Cutwini lies in a relatively isolated area with poor infrastructure, reached by a singled dirt road leading down towards the Indian Ocean (see photo 3). However, access to the sea (2–3 km from the village) is difficult and can only be reached through a steep terrain walk. The arable fields surrounding the village lie mostly abandoned and villagers primarily cultivate in their smaller household gardens, for their own consumption or animal feed (the decline in agriculture in the area is discussed in detail in Paper I). In 2002, the village consisted of 146 households, but by 2016, it had grown by 19% to 174 households, with a total of 918 residents. Around 26 kilometers from Cutwini lies the closest town of Lusikisiki, where clinics, a hospital, supermarkets, banks, ATMs, petrol stations and clothing, furniture and construction stores are available. The drive to Lusikisiki takes about 45 minutes to one hour due to the poor road conditions. Minibus taxis drive back and forth at least twice per day and there is

no other form of public transport. There is a school from preschool to grade 9 in Cutwini, but high school is only available close to Lusikisiki. Cutwini, like Manteku, has a large portion of unemployed residents but around a half of all households in Cutwini receives some form of income from work, both formal and informal, including public employment schemes and piece jobs like selling traditional beer, airtime for mobile phones, fruits or clothes. These incomes vary greatly in the regularity of the income earned.

Manteku is a smaller village located right by the Indian Ocean, and close to the river mouth of Mzintlava. It also has fairly poor infrastructure, although it has a bus which goes through the village two times per day back and forth, in addition to minibus taxis. In 2016, the village had grown 14%, from 87 to 99 households with a total of 608 residents. From Manteku, it takes around one hour to reach Lusikisiki, and the school children walk or take the bus to a neighbouring village (a preschool is available in Manteku). The closest clinic is along the road about 45 minutes by bus. Manteku has fewer public employment schemes than Cutwini.

Residential sites in Cutwini and Manteku are applied for within systems of communal tenure from the village sub-headman. When (mostly young men) decide to leave their parental homes, to start their own homestead, they apply for permission and a site from the sub-headman. If permission is granted, the sub-headman will allocate a plot of land for the house building as well as a garden and/or space for a livestock *kraal* (enclosure for animals). Women can apply for their own homestead (these exist in both villages), although it is rarer. Access to land for cultivation (including a field if needed) in the rural villages in this area is relatively secure, if village processes for land acquisition are followed, as also noted in a neighbouring village by de la Hey & Beinart (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017). The only caveat may be a lack of good residential sites, with residents in both villages complaining of gardens and fields being sandy and waterlogged (Cutwini), on very steeply sloping land (Manteku) and salty, as well as close to bush animals that eat crops (both villages).

Cutwini has larger communal grazing land and agricultural land due to a more flat topography while Manteku has much hillier and steeper topography (see photo 4) and thus a more difficult terrain to cultivate. Although large-scale, capital-intensive, commercial agriculture exists in South Africa, the former homelands such as Transkei are dominated by (a declining) small-scale agriculture for household subsistence (Neves, 2017). The only local agricultural employment opportunity in the area around Cutwini and Manteku is the Magwa tea plantation (described in more detail in Paper I).

The homesteads in Cutwini are lined up in a linear pattern, relatively close to each other. This is due to Cutwini being subject to “betterment” policies in the

1960s, which during apartheid was a forced villagisation process where previously more dispersed settlements were relocated closer to each other, forming more nucleated villages (Neves, 2017). This affected the space for how large household gardens can be in Cutwini, whereas forced relocations happened to a much smaller extent in Manteku, which means the homesteads in Manteku are more scattered and consequently had slightly larger gardens in 2002.

Other than agriculture and livestock keeping, many households in both villages still collect firewood (to complement the expensive electricity and also for cooking certain dishes) as well as using marine resources, including fishing, crayfishing, and mussel collection, both for sale and own consumption. Fishing is more common in Manteku due to easier access to the sea than in Cutwini. Discussed further in Paper I, marine resource use has increased due to rising prices of fish and more access to better and inexpensive fishing equipment. Thus, as a fall back strategy in times of shrinking wage employment opportunities; marine resource use has grown in importance as a livelihood activity since 2002. However, a majority of households do not engage in fishing, rather, those that do have increased their frequency of use.

From the fieldwork, it is notable that the villages have experienced an increased exposure to urban lifestyles through TV, mobile phones and social media which are playing a part in changing youth aspirations. Changes in lifestyles and attitudes, observed also by other authors (de la hey & Beinart, 2017) are reflected in the field sites as well. The youth are seen as more difficult to control than before, or less likely to listen to, or follow their parents' traditional ways, as de la Hey & Beinart (2017) observed in a neighbouring village to Cutwini. Additionally, other forms of change in social relations were observed, such as the erosion of patriarchal control in households where the elderly lament the relative independence and 'freedom' of women and children these days. This is due to education but also a greater awareness of rights, which was heavily campaigned for in post-apartheid South Africa. Women are more reluctant to marry and subject themselves to male control, in part because of their possession of the independent income of social grants (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017). However, decreasing marriage rates are also due to the sometimes significant costs of *lobola* (bridewealth). These changes in social relations, both from a gender and inter-generational perspective, have been argued by many (often elderly) in rural South Africa to be "socially corrosive" in rural areas (Dubeld, 2013) and leading to a form of nostalgia for the past (Reed, 2016) where declining agriculture and declining marriage rates was not so pronounced.

As mentioned earlier, the CSG and other social grants are constitutionally protected entitlements. Claiming the grant does not depend on political affiliation or any conditional behaviours. This is also important with regards

to the mitigating risk of targeted cash transfer schemes imbuing certain individuals with the power to choose who receives a cash transfer or not (e.g. a chief or headman), which could affect power relations at the local level as has been noted elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa (MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011). Neither the village headmen nor the ward councillor of these villages have any power over recipients' processes of claiming a CSG, however the headman may hold power in terms of other social protection policies, e.g. who is selected for public employment schemes. While the headman has power over the allocation of land and homestead sites, according to the interviews and informal discussion, the power balance has shifted somewhat towards the ward councillor and the ward committee members, whom the villagers now turn to in case of economic difficulties. While the ward councillor is better off than an average villager due to receiving a state salary (Williams, 2018), the headmen in these villages are not significantly better off in terms of income than other residents.

Most households in both villages rely mainly on purchased food from supermarkets in Lusikisiki or from local smaller informal village shops, so called *spaza* shops. Supermarkets have been established in rural areas in South Africa for a long time (Du Toit & Neves, 2014) and the many low-price stores and supermarkets alongside the main road in Lusikisiki, as well as the newly built shopping plaza, receive a significant amount of customers and consumers on any given day, with peaks during grant paydays.

In terms of social grants, 85% of households in Cutwini receive at least one social grant and in Manteku it is 89%. However, that does not mean that the remaining 10–15% of households are considered to be 'not poor'. It just means that they are not eligible for a grant (e.g. a single male headed household or households without children). Thus, the majority of households receives at least one social grant and the bulk of overall grants consist of Child Support Grants and Old Age Pension (the old age grant). In both villages, all CSG recipients are women, and most, but not all, are the biological mother of the child.

The circle diagrams in Figure 2 present a breakdown of the number of social grants in both villages from the 2016 household survey.

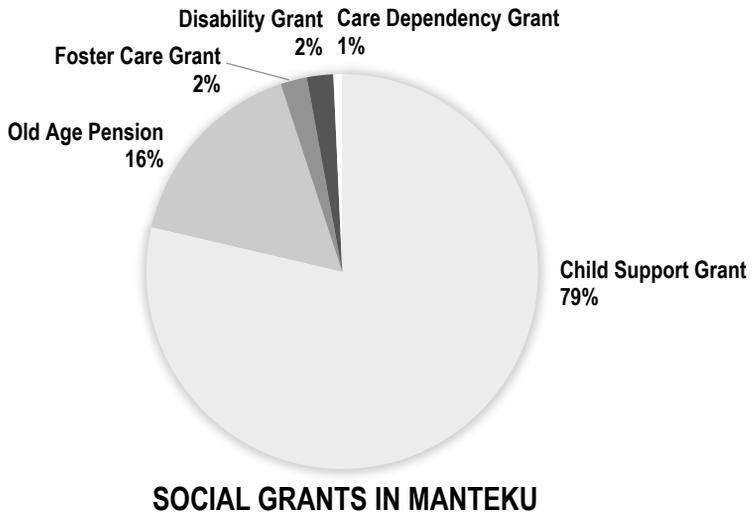
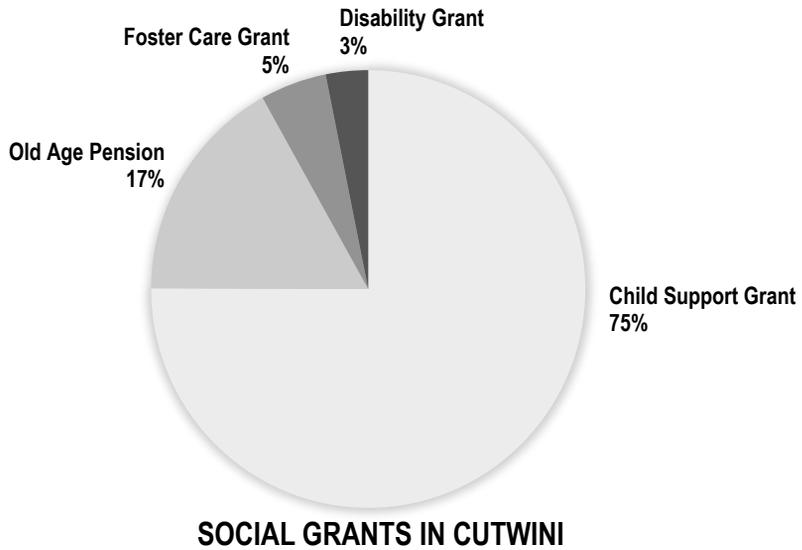


Figure 2: Breakdown of the number of social grants in both villages in 2016. Out of a total of 447 social grants paid out monthly in Cutwini, 334 are CSGs (75%). Out of a total of 276 social grants in Manteku, 217 are CSGs (79%). The Child Support Grant is thus the most common social grant in both villages.

These diagrams (Figure 2) indicate the importance of the CSG, first rolled out in these villages in 2002, which reaches the most households by far. In total the overall injection of cash through the social grants to Cutwini at village level was around R272 980 per month<sup>7</sup> in 2016, and around R160 790 per month for Manteku. Out of this, the CSG was R120 240 in Cutwini and R78 120 in Manteku at village level in 2016.

Over the past 18 years, the former homeland of Transkei has seen several failed state and donor-funded development project interventions, often agricultural development programmes or other productive income-generating projects. Examples of agricultural interventions include the Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP) (Jacobsson, 2013; Madyibi, 2013); the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, Eastern Cape (AsgiSA EC) (Hajdu *et al.*, 2012), and an EU funded horticultural project in Manteku (Hajdu, 2006). Attempts at job creation include a tourism development intervention (Cousins & Kepe, 2004) and a microfinance program (Hajdu, 2006). None of the above-mentioned programs has resulted in significant improvements to villagers' livelihoods and all of the programs or projects disappeared within a few years. As will be discussed later, rural development continues to be promoted as agricultural development in the Eastern Cape (see photo 5). The financial investment in these interventions and their lack of tangible results in terms of income generation stand in contrast to the importance of social grants income for local households.

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<sup>7</sup> In 2016, this converted to approximately 21,900 USD in Cutwini and roughly 13,000 USD in Manteku.



## 3 Conceptual framework and literature review

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework used in this thesis, drawing on concepts from social justice theory to explore the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers. Two sections of literature review are then presented which engages with, speaks to and draws from rural livelihood studies and social protection/social policy literature. This literature review also draws on the burgeoning anthropological literature on cash transfers. These different fields of literature are sometimes interrelated and partly overlapping.

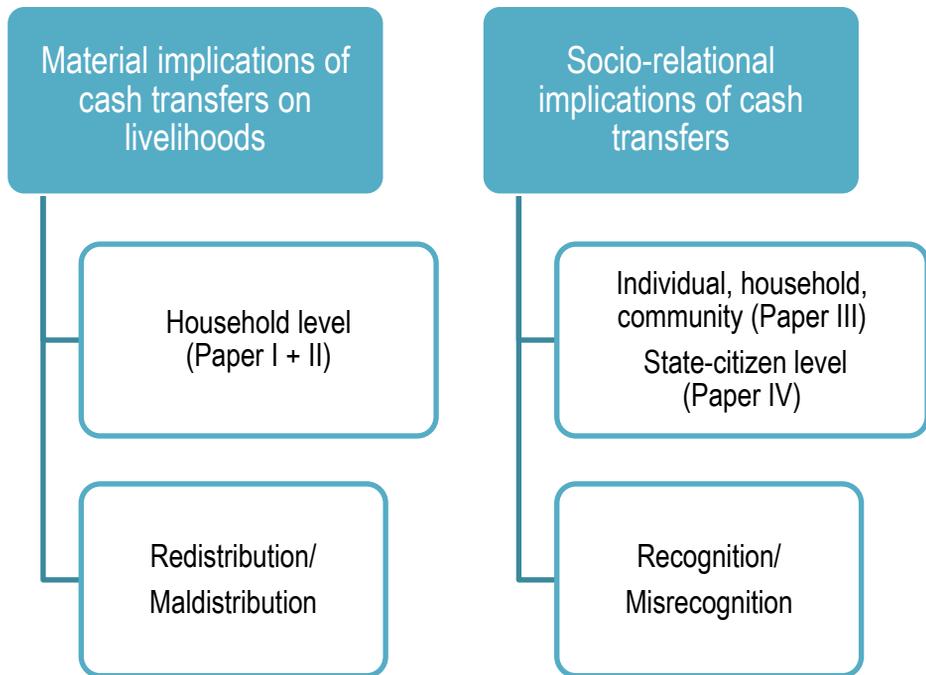
The literature and the concepts used can be seen as lenses to understand the different implications of cash transfers and as tools to explore the empirical data from different critical vantage points. The four different papers that form this thesis all contribute to discussions of changing rural livelihoods and lived experiences of cash transfers on different levels (material and socio-relational).

### 3.1 Conceptual framework

As mentioned in the introduction, cash transfers are often studied in terms of their straightforward material impacts on poverty. However, this thesis also explores the broader implications of cash transfers, including the long-term impacts on broader issues, such as long-term productive assets and livelihoods, as well as social and relational implications for individuals who receive the cash transfer. Similar to MacAuslan & Riemenschneider (2011) and Attah *et al.* (2016) drawing on a wellbeing framework (three-dimensional wellbeing, on material, relational and symbolic wellbeing, see Gough & McGregor, 2007) to analyze not just material but also ‘non-material’ impacts of cash transfers, I propose in Figure 3 a conceptual framework that incorporates both the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers. The figure shows which aspect of cash transfers and at what level the four papers of the thesis focus on. Paper I deals with longitudinal

changes in livelihoods and the contextual specificities of the study villages, where cash transfers in the shape of social grants are shown to be an increasingly crucial part of livelihood portfolios. This sets the stage for exploring the material implications of cash transfers, especially their long-term effects on livelihoods (Paper II), and the socio-relational implications at individual, household and community levels (Paper III) to state-citizen level (Paper IV).

Nancy Fraser’s concepts of *redistribution* and *recognition* (1995, 2000, 2003, 2013) have proven useful in exploring the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in rural South Africa. I borrow the concepts of redistribution and recognition and link them to the material and socio-relational aspects of cash transfers in Figure 3 to advance an understanding of two interlinked dimensions of the implications of cash transfers on a micro level.



*Figure 3: The conceptual framework analytically separates between the material implications of cash transfers on livelihoods and the socio-relational implications of cash transfers at different levels. The first has households as the unit of analysis and primarily concerns Paper I–II. The second has interviews with individual as the unit of analysis but explores through these different levels of impact up to the state level, and primarily concerns Paper III–IV. These two dimensions are linked to the two concepts of redistribution and recognition, where both are needed to achieve social justice, with maldistribution and misrecognition being the obstructions to this goal.*

Fraser's social justice theory expands from solely considering socio-economic injustice (i.e. economic marginalization and poverty/deprivation–*maldistribution*) to incorporate dimensions of cultural and symbolic injustices, such as disrespect and lack of worthiness, which obstructs wellbeing and dignity (*misrecognition*).

The underlying foundation of Fraser's theory of social justice is that formal notions of equality are insufficient, what is required instead is substantive notions of equality. This is reflected in her conception of social justice as *participatory parity* meaning, "justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life" (Fraser, 2007:20). The substantive requirements for participatory parity is about having the economic resources (*redistribution*) and social standing (*recognition*) needed to participate as peers in social life (Liebenberg, 2007). Hence, the two major obstacles for social justice are Fraser's concepts of *maldistribution* and *misrecognition*.

As poverty does not only have material but also relational dimensions, *misrecognition* is defined as "to be denied the status of full partner in social interactions, as consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (Fraser, 2000:113–114). Forms of misrecognition often appears on grounds of race, gender and sexual orientation and relevant for this thesis would be the widespread negative discourses that routinely subject recipients of welfare benefits with disrespect through actions like constructing women as "self-serving and a drain on resources" (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2017:57). Another labelling of these processes are forms of "othering" (Lister, 2004) where people living in poverty are routinely subjected to mistrust and stigmatization, deeply rooted negative often racialized and gendered stereotypes that impinge negatively on people's wellbeing and dignity much in the same way as *maldistribution* does.

Fraser argues consistently throughout her work that neither dimension of social justice is enough on its own, but rather, redistribution and recognition needs to be addressed simultaneously. Conversely, *maldistribution* and *misrecognition* are intimately intertwined and connected. There is *no recognition without redistribution* and vice versa (Fraser & Naples, 2004), and as she argues "virtually every struggle against injustice, when properly understood, implies demands for both redistribution and recognition" (Fraser, 1995:70)<sup>8</sup>. However, Fraser's conceptualization of *recognition* should not be viewed as a focus on recognition

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<sup>8</sup> In this thesis, I do not use Fraser's social justice theory in its entirety when analysing the material and socio-relational effects of cash transfers. For example, Fraser added a third dimension, (*representation*), to her theory in mid 2000s, which I do not use. *Representation* was added to the theory as a way of addressing justice beyond sovereign territorial states in times globalization (Fraser, 2007) and concern not just *what* should be redistributed as a matter of justice within a nation state but also *who* should count as a member and *which* is the relevant community (Fraser, 2009).

of group identity, but rather as recognition of the status of a person to participate as a peer in social life (Fraser, 2000). As Lister argues, an emphasis on group difference is not helpful when applied to the politics of poverty (Lister, 2007). The last thing impoverished people need, suffering under structural mass-unemployment and structural injustices (from past and present), is recognition of their difference, instead what they want is universal recognition of their common humanity, citizenship and equal worth (Lister, 2007).

Fraser's concepts allows me to explore the implications of cash transfers in terms of, on the one hand, material effects such as improved livelihoods and reduction of poverty (*redistribution* in Fraser's terminology) and on the other hand, socio-relational effects such as improved social status of individuals (e.g. dignity, respect and wellbeing) and enhanced sense of citizenship (Fraser's *recognition*).

I thus use the concept of *recognition* to explore both the socio-relational implications of cash transfers on individual, household and community level (RQ2), and how cash transfers might affect state-citizen relations (RQ3), contributing to recipients being recognized as a rights-holders which, in turn is linked to social citizenship (RQ3) (Leisering & Barrientos, 2013; Leisering, 2019).

Fraser's concepts is useful for this thesis on South African welfare programs as her work resonates clearly with the literature on feminist welfare politics, e.g. by deconstructing the central concept of 'dependency' in welfare discourses (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). The notion of dependency is central in much of South African wider public and political discourse around social grants (Surender *et al.*, 2010; Marais, 2011). Fraser's social justice theory stems from a long tradition of distributive justice theorists. This tradition has, for example, been heavily influenced by the seminal work of political philosopher John Rawls (1971), but Fraser's work has been seen as more progressive, and to some extent radical, than the more broadly social liberal approach of Rawls (Hickey, 2014) and has been described as "a model for politically engaged scholarship" (Fraser & Naples, 2004:1103). While Fraser (1995) notes that Rawls' concept of 'justice as fairness' in the distribution of primary goods includes dimensions of cultural justice as well, such as 'the social bases of self-respect' being a primary good to be distributed, the central thrust of his justice theory primarily concerns distributive economic justice. Thus, Rawls' theory of justice has been argued to miss the importance of recognition as a central component of justice (Barrientos, 2016). Fraser's framework thus combines economic redistribution with a focus on recognition and thereby including issues that are also central to wellbeing, such as lack of dignity, disrespect and being subjected to negative stereotypes, which often occur around welfare programs and have been scrutinized in social policy literature (Lister, 2004).

### 3.2 Material implications of cash transfers on livelihoods

This section describes the links between cash transfers and livelihoods, and how, through the cash transfers, the state affects how rural impoverished populations survive in the Eastern Cape. I will describe how state cash transfers have become a significant and important aspect of livelihoods, while also being one of many ways that people sustain a living, as well as how cash transfers transform or change livelihoods.

A common definition of cash transfers is “occasional or regular distribution of sums of money to vulnerable or poor households” (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018:1). In their recent ethnographic comparative study on the phenomena of cash transfers, anthropologists Olivier de Sardan and Piccoli (2018:1) describe cash transfers as a “simple mechanism with multiple forms and functions” based on multiple agendas. These multiple agendas for cash transfers are for example state social policy responses to life-cycle risks of poverty (e.g. having children and old-age), reducing poor households vulnerability to shocks and smoothing their consumption, acting as temporary aid during humanitarian crises, attempts to improve health or schooling outcomes (human capital) and, in some cases, even attempts to eradicate extreme poverty or attempting to break the inter-generational transmission of poverty (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018; Fisher *et al.*, 2017). Cash transfer is the term most often used in the broader development literature. It represents a “neutral” term in relation to other ideologically contested welfare terms and is in its essence a technical description of the phenomenon—a transfer of cash. In the literature, there is an abundance of terms used (social assistance, social security, welfare payments). The design of cash transfer programmes also vary, often reflecting different state’s ideological notions of how to address poverty and their capacity and resources in implementing what is often large-scale anti-poverty programs. Thus, in many low-income countries, cash transfer programmes are sometimes partly or fully donor-funded through international development aid (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018; Devereux, 2011, 2013).

As mentioned however, cash transfers in South Africa are publicly financed, non-contributory, regular, and unconditional benefits in cash to citizens, under a means test, in order to address those living in poverty (Devereux, 2011). In South Africa, cash transfers are known as social grants, and when using that term in this thesis it should be seen as a cash transfer organised as a state social assistance scheme distributing regular cash payments to people living in poverty.

In order to understand the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in the study area, and, in particular, the implications of the Child Support Grant (CSG), it is imperative to also understand the context of changing rural livelihoods in Eastern Cape, South Africa. The issues of long-term changes

in rural livelihoods are elaborated on in Paper I, and discussed in connection to potential effects of the CSG in Paper II. The mapping of these long-term changes forms the basis for understanding the context into which the CSG has been introduced.

### 3.2.1 Cash transfers and livelihoods

This section introduces the concept of livelihoods before delving deeper into more recent contributions on livelihood changes and de-agrarianisation (as a particular livelihood change in this context) in rural South Africa. The section also includes a literature review on the productive effects of cash transfers on livelihoods, primarily productive investments in assets.

The thinking around livelihoods in efforts to understand how people make a living in rural settings have a long history but gathered pace and interest in the late 80s and 1990s through the works e.g. Robert Chambers (Scoones, 2015; see Chambers, 1983; Chambers & Conway, 1992). Livelihood approaches and research also built on Amartya Sen's entitlement approach to famine and poverty (Sen, 1981) and, since the 1990s, has become increasingly central to discussions on rural development, poverty and vulnerability (De Haan, 2017; Scoones, 1998, 2015; Bank, 2010). A common definition of a livelihood is that it comprises the "capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities for a means of a living" (Chambers & Conway, 1992:6). Thus, the definition focuses not only on the activities themselves, but on resources in terms of assets and capabilities needed to perform them, including how social relations come to shape them. Employing a livelihoods approach is useful as it stays rooted in a bottom-up approach concerning people's lives, everyday problems, challenges and opportunities, a deeply "contextually sensitive enquiry, attentive to the endowments, assets and activities on which impoverished and vulnerable households rely to survive" (Neves, 2017:11). A broad livelihoods approach was used in a previous in-depth study of the two case-study villages (Hajdu, 2006) which is used as a baseline when following up changes in livelihoods in the survey reported on in Paper I and II.

Understanding livelihoods is key to addressing South Africa's widespread poverty, which affects rural villagers' ability to participate as peers in social life. In Paper I and II we investigate how livelihoods have changed in these study sites between 2002 and 2016 and what the material implications of the CSG has been on long-term livelihoods for households. Livelihoods are understood as the manner in which rural villagers diversify and combine activities, how they draw on assets and capabilities, and how households' survival strategies and social relations shape these choices. Livelihood activities are seen as multiple and

interdependent and should not be viewed in isolation, but rather in terms of ‘portfolios’, where multiple activities relate to and complement each other. As Scoones (2015) acknowledges (drawing on Fraser), social injustice can occur from not only inequitable access to material (livelihood) resources but also from the social and political spheres of how people are viewed, recognized and appreciated. Thus, questions of social relations and social status (*recognition*) are also key to livelihoods and affect each other (MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011).

Ellis (2000) argued for an understanding of rural livelihoods as diverse, where rural populations combine different strategies and activities for making a living. This way of viewing rural change emerged as a response to the more one-sided focus on agriculture in much of rural livelihoods literature and policy prevailing in the 1980s or 1990s and which underemphasized other forms of livelihoods (Ellis 2000, Hajdu 2006). The over-emphasis on agriculture is a tendency that is still present in the literature on livelihoods in the former homelands in South Africa, which we discuss in Paper I.

South Africa has been described as experiencing “simultaneously monetization, de-agrarianisation and de-industrialization” (Du Toit & Neves, 2007:IV). In rural South Africa today, the likelihood of attaining a formal job is for many a shrinking prospect. Waged employment in South Africa for the working class in the mining or agricultural sector have seen a rapid decline during the last decades (Seekings and Natrass, 2005) and unemployment (especially in rural areas of Eastern Cape) is high (Shackleton *et al.*, 2015). In Paper I, we highlight the marked decrease of formal employment in the studied villages since 2002. During the apartheid period, rural livelihoods in the Eastern Cape relied significantly on remittances by men who migrated to cities and worked in industries or in mining. This male breadwinner existence is today no longer an option to the same extent as it was three or four decades ago. While remaining a key aspiration for most, waged employment has become a fading dream for many rural, low-skilled inhabitants of Eastern Cape (Neves & Du Toit, 2013; Williams, 2018). This has led to a form of reversed dependency wherein men have come to rely more and more on women/partners and grandparents to sustain them, as social grants more often than not form the principal source of income in households in rural South Africa, especially the Eastern Cape (Bank, 2010; Bähre, 2011; Ferguson, 2015). This process is evident in Paper III where I demonstrate these processes of reversed dependencies and changes in male breadwinner status.

Another form of decline evident in South Africa concerns smallholder agriculture. Bryceson (2019) describes long-standing processes of de-agrarianisation and de-peasantisation where rural populations in Africa, and South Africa in particular, rely increasingly less on agriculture as a means of making a

living. De-agrarianisation is defined as a “process of: (i) economic activity reorientation (livelihood), (ii) occupational adjustment (work activity), and (iii) spatial realignment of human settlement (residence) away from agrarian patterns” (Bryceson 1996:99). Bank (2010), argues that livelihoods research in South Africa has not adequately acknowledged de-agrarianisation. This neglect has been to some extent rectified in more recent research which has taken place close to the study sites, as discussed in Paper I. De la Hey and Beinart (2017) explored people’s own perceptions of de-agrarianisation in the Eastern Cape (in a neighbouring village to this study), and found that there are several explanations for the abandonment of fields in favour of smaller household gardens and a decline in cultivation in general. They include local contextual factors such as the risk of bush pigs and monkeys destroying the maize fields at night due to some fields being close to the forest. The authors’ note that a strong factor in relation to the decline in cultivation is also the cost-benefit analysis by the villagers where agriculture (especially large fields further from homesteads) comes out as a high risk, high cost but low profit activity. Combined with the alternative income that social grants offer, as well as access to smaller piece jobs or local informal income generating activities, many are ‘disinclined’ towards farming. The availability of cash income therefore gives people a choice to either engage in subsistence agricultural production for the household or buy foodstuff (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017).

In Paper I, we have a detailed discussion about the different contextual, environmental, social and economic factors behind de-agrarianisation in the study villages. This concluding argument is that the processes the villages have undergone, with an abandonment of low-value staple food production in larger fields but a largely intact and sometimes intensified garden cultivation of higher-value vegetable crops, is an economically rational act by households. Additionally, de la Hey and Beinart (2017) point to a discernible lack of labour within the household where the elderly can no longer rely to the same extent on younger family members due to the youth attending school instead of herding cattle or helping out in the garden (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017). As a result of increased access to education, youth aspirations also changed towards other livelihoods than agriculture.

These changes in social relations and wider structural changes in the South African economy, such as rising levels of structural mass-unemployment and de-industrialisation with the resulting decrease of regular remittances, have positioned rural households as reliant on social grants in particular for their survival (Bank, 2010). This is corroborated and particularly evident in Paper I where we discuss the livelihood activities in the studied villages. Bank (2010) argues that there has previously been a tendency for South African research to

situate the rural household outside of capitalism and modernity with assumptions of a strong and coherent household unit that employs collective action and strategic decision-making in terms of their livelihoods. This hindered a deeper understanding of rural change that would take into account how rural households in South Africa and the Eastern Cape in particular have been shaped from within the larger political economy. Rather than standing as “defensive bastions of hope and cohesion in a sea of political and economic change” many rural households in Eastern Cape have become dispersed or fragmented with often tenuous urban-rural links between kin (Bank, 2010:203).

Rural livelihoods in the former homelands of Eastern Cape are according to Neves & Du Toit (2013) constituted primarily through four broad domains in times of declining formal employment and de-agrarianisation (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). The first include small but not insignificant agricultural activities that come from land-based endowments in rural areas. Secondly, although the informal sector is comparatively small in South Africa, rural livelihoods include various informal economic activities, best described as small-scale both farm and off-farm, informal self-employment. Thirdly, state social grants invariably come to represent a large share of household income depending on the eligibility of household members (e.g. a person over 60 years for pension or primary caregiver of children for CSG). Lastly, these first three domains interact and are affected by “elaborate, culturally embedded and spatially distributed practices of mutual exchange and social reciprocity” (Neves & Du Toit, 2013:107) in which income streams are distributed via cultural norms, obligations and moral claims, often but not exclusively tied to kinship relations (Neves & Du Toit, 2013).

The Papers (I–III) in this thesis investigates these domains and adds the small but not insignificant formal employment and public employment schemes that also exists in the field sites. These activities are aggregated (on village level) to show the relative importance of each activity. The higher-value social grants such as the old-age pension potentially are the largest infusion of cash in rural areas, enabling entire households to form around a pensioner. As rural livelihoods are often characterized by vulnerability and uncertainty, the reliable and predictable social grants often help impoverished rural populations save in times of crisis and invest in income generating activities and productive assets, thus allowing people to be more engaged in risk taking activities and providing stimulus for local trade (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). This is evident in Paper II where we investigate the productive effects of social grants on livelihoods.

Thus, building on the insights of diversification of livelihoods and changes in rural social relations, together with ongoing processes of jobless de-agrarianisation in rural Eastern Cape, various claims for distribution e.g. from

the state in the form of social grants or indirectly through claims of those grants through forms of social kinships, become increasingly important for livelihoods (Neves & Du Toit, 2013; Du Toit & Neves, 2014; Ferguson, 2015). Neves and Du Toit (2013) note the effects South African redistribution through social grants have on social inequality but that “the inequality-reducing effects of social transfers pale alongside their success in reducing poverty amongst the very poorest households. So impoverished are South Africa’s poorest that receipt of a social grant effectively lifts many recipient’s households out of the lowest income decile” (Neves & Du Toit, 2013:106). These findings are corroborated by Paper I and II, which show that social grants have had discernable effects on long-term livelihoods, in particular Paper II, which examines the productive effects of the CSG on livelihoods.

### 3.2.2 Productive effects of cash transfers on livelihoods

The primary objective of cash transfers is usually protective and welfare enhancing, such as smoothing consumption and mitigating risk for poor and vulnerable households. Earlier scholarship points to the various welfare effects of cash transfers, such as reduction in monetary poverty, increased consumption in poor households, improved health and nutrition outcomes and improved educational outcomes (Hulme *et al.*, 2010; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016). South African evaluations and research on social grants show a range of positive impacts for children on improved food security, improved health and educational effects such as the grants used for school fees, school transport and school uniforms (DSD, SASSA, UNICEF, 2011, 2012; Agüero *et al.*, 2006; Zembe-Mkabile *et al.*, 2018). However, recent research has started to examine and explore whether cash transfers may be able to go beyond such traditional welfare objectives and have wider productive effects on livelihoods (Daidone *et al.*, 2019; Davis *et al.*, 2016; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016). What is defined as ‘productive’ may differ from context to context but often refers to the improvement of long-term living standards rather than only ameliorating poverty (Handa, 2018). This section is limited to reviewing the literature in relation to productive effects on household investments in assets that save labour time, enhance productivity (e.g. of agricultural activities) or facilitate engagement with economic opportunities including informal enterprise in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is how productive effects are defined in Paper II. Although potential effects on nutrition and education can also be defined as ‘productive’ or having positive livelihood impacts in long-term term (Fisher *et al.*, 2017), it was not the focus in Paper II, where we chose to focus on more direct effects at household level.

Much of the research in Sub-Saharan Africa concerning productive effects of cash transfers emanate from (large-scale) impact evaluations of African cash transfer programs. The Transfer Project, a joint collaboration/research initiative with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has produced a considerable amount of evidence from quantitative and qualitative impact evaluations of eight African countries showing both the protective and productive effects of state cash transfers (Davis *et al.*, 2016; Fisher *et al.*, 2017; Daidone *et al.*, 2019).

In Malawi, evaluations of the Social Cash Transfer pilot program found an increased ownership of agricultural implements (for example hoes, sickles and axes) and of chickens. Other impacts of the cash transfer suggested that informal seasonal agricultural labour declined, as people spent more time farming their own plots. The evaluation revealed that cash transfers help farming households overcome credit and liquidity constraints (Boone *et al.*, 2013).

Among the cash transfer programs evaluated by the Transfer Project in sub Saharan Africa, Zambia stood out in terms of positive productive effects. The Zambian Child Grant Program (targeted at the three poorest districts and the poorest households with children under five years of age) evaluation showed significant impacts to beneficiary households with regards to agricultural activities, e.g. investment in agricultural tools and inputs (in particular axes and hoes) and livestock (in particular chicken). Other impacts included an increase in latrine ownership as well as improved daily living conditions as many purchased lighting (candles and torches) instead of using open fire for illumination (Handa *et al.*, 2016; Handa *et al.*, 2018; Daidone *et al.*, 2019). Apart from Zambia, the rigorous impact evaluations on cash transfer programs from the Transfer Project show more selective and mixed effects on productive impacts in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Malawi where Ghana had the least direct impact productive activities. Concerning 'dependency fears', the evaluations also point to no overall reduction in labour supply or work effort, instead the money was used to improve household income-generating activities (Daidone *et al.*, 2019). Some of the factors suggested for the differences in impacts are the transfer value and predictability, the length of the evaluation period, including the messaging and information provided to beneficiaries. Indeed, out of the programs evaluated, the Zambian child grant program stood out with the most generous transfer sums including the most regular payments, which is important for poor households' probability in engaging and investing in productive activities (Daidone *et al.*, 2019).

The evaluations rely for the most part on quantitative methodologies. However in-deep understandings of local livelihood activities and contexts is needed in order to fully understand long-term productive effects, but studies on

long-term productive effects of cash transfers that combine qualitative and quantitative methods remain few (Davis *et al.*, 2012; Fisher *et al.*, 2017). However, one study from the Transfer Project used cross-country qualitative studies (Fisher *et al.*, 2017) which showed the lived experiences of people living in poverty and their strategic use of cash transfers. In the context of often severe deprivation, the beneficiaries describe how they use the cash transfer primarily for food, shelter, medicine and children's education, acting as a safety net and meeting primarily daily needs. While there is evidence that the cash led to a reduction of negative coping strategies (such as child labour), the effects of the cash on productive investments were less uniform.

As cash transfer programs differ considerably in both design and amount throughout Africa, the varied productive effects on things like assets are unsurprising. Cash transfers elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa are often targeted to the poorest and most labour constrained households (often households with only a few or no working age adults) which limits the potential of any productive effects. A general conclusion is that the evidence from cross-country comparative studies shows regular and predictable cash transfers to be a key component in yielding productive effects on livelihoods, this was however not the situation in most of the studied cases (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). In contrast, South African social grants are both regular and predictable monthly payments, the importance of which is evident from the perspectives of the women interviewed in Paper III. Social grants in South Africa are also not targeted at a small minority of households in a village which can lead to social divisiveness and tensions (MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011) but are rather categorically targeted grants nationally (e.g. pensioners over 60, caregivers of children in poor households). Paper II differs somewhat from the recent impact evaluation literature in that we have had the opportunity to study the more long-term effects of cash transfers on livelihoods between the years 2002–2016 via a follow-up study. However, as also discussed in Paper II, the difficulty of exploring and investigating productive long-term effects of cash transfers in South Africa is that the CSG were never intended to produce such effects and thus effects outside of the primary welfare objectives for children (food, schooling costs, clothes) must be seen as an additional positive effect. As the results of Paper II show, however, it is possible to find such long term effects especially for women who received multiple CSGs and thus had money to invest after tending to immediate needs. However, literature on other more 'intangible' dimensions of implications of cash transfers is simultaneously growing and it is to these social and relational aspects I now turn the attention.

### 3.3 The socio-relational implications of cash transfers

Moving beyond the literature on cash transfers and their material benefits for households, there is growing body of literature around the various potential *social and relational implications* of being a cash transfer recipient, on individual, household, community and state-citizen level (Patel & Ulriksen, 2017).

The way socio-relational implications are understood and conceptualised in this thesis is in relation to Fraser's concept of *recognition*, i.e. the potential of cash transfers to enhance recipients' participation as full partner in social life and perceived by society as worthy of respect. At an individual level, socio-relational implications concern wellbeing, which can be an increased sense of dignity and self-respect, relief from worry and stress, increased autonomy and decreased shame. At household level, socio-relational implications concern the potential ability of CSG recipients to strengthen their social status within the household entailing changes in gender relations, which in turn may change power relations both within households and communities. At community level, the socio-relational implications can concern the ways cash transfers potentially affect solidarity and reciprocity as well as social networks. Negative socio-relational implications relating to *misrecognition* refer to processes of 'othering' (stigmatization) and in what way moral discourses around welfare recipients' in society affect recipients' ability to participate as peers in social life. Lastly, at state-citizen level, relational implications can concern how encounters and relations with agents of the state through cash transfer access and payments may affect notions of entitlements and a sense of social citizenship.

Cash transfer programme beneficiaries report experiencing changes that go beyond material improvements, which has been termed "micro-level subjective transformations" (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016). These micro-level effects concern "individual experiences and subjective changes" or "psychosocial effects" (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016:1090) that can appear as a result of gaining access to cash transfers.

The term micro-level subjective transformation is used in relation to RQ2 (Paper III) as it allows an exploration of the lived experiences of the participants, how they speak of changes in their lives in relation to the CSG, which relates back to forms of *recognition*. The term effect is here used not in a narrow quantitative sense of measuring the extent of different effects or establish exact causal relations, but rather the perspectives and narratives of cash transfer beneficiaries on perceived subjective changes, in their lived experiences. This is important as, even though a cash transfer alone might have only ameliorative effects on poverty status (i.e. does not affect the political and structural roots of poverty), it can potentially be socially transformative on an individual level and enhance the social status of the recipient to act as a peer in social life (*recognition*).

Caution should however be taken as social change is complex and does not work in simple causative ways, nor are subjective changes necessarily unidirectional. Indeed, positive social effects are often dependent on the design and implementation of the cash transfer programme as well as the context in which it exists. This is evident in studies of cash transfer programmes that highlight the potential and limitations surrounding effects on gender relations at a household level. In sub-Saharan Africa, Fisher *et al.* (2017) argue that cash transfer programmes lacked an impact on existing patriarchal norms, on women's decision making in households or on investment in productive assets that are prioritised by women (see also Bonilla *et al.*, 2017). While Paper III reports a lack of impact of the CSG on gendered division of labour, it also reports how women experience increased decision-making and bargaining power and increased status in their households due to sometimes being the main breadwinners. This corroborates research on gender relations and the CSG in urban settings in South Africa. (Patel *et al.*, 2012; Patel & Knijn, 2015).

Feminist critique of cash transfers points to the problems of reinforcing a maternalistic assumption of women as “bearers of benefits to others” and using women to “fix the world” (Chant, 2016:6; Chant & Sweetman, 2012; Molyneux, 2006). Such critique is often levelled against the conditional aspect of conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs), (which predominantly have female recipients), forcing women to comply with time-consuming obligations (e.g. taking children to health checks, assuring school attendance) in order to receive the cash. This is argued to reinforce/reproduce inequality and the gendered division of labour, placing more burden of care on mothers (Molyneux, 2006, 2007; Cookson, 2018; Holmes & Jones, 2013). From a South African perspective, this critique is lessened by the fact that women who collect a CSG do not have to comply with conditions in order to collect their grant (social grants are effectively unconditional), and that the CSG does not target women explicitly but rather the primary care giver of the child. In reality, however, women collect the overwhelming majority of Child Support Grants and, as argued in Paper III, the burden of care and social reproduction still lies disproportionately with women.

In South Africa, *misrecognition* is argued to be evident in moral discourses that potentially affect people's dignity, such as prevailing views that social grants increase teenage pregnancy (where especially young black women are portrayed as having sex in order to have children to be able to receive the CSG. The CSG income is often pejoratively called *imali yeqolo* (loosely translated as ‘lying down on your back-money’) (Liebenberg, 2007; Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2017). Although research on fertility refutes claims of increased teenage pregnancy (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2015; Makiwane, 2010), the discourse is still

prevalent in South Africa (Hochfeld & Plageron, 2017), together with talk of ‘welfare mothers’, or ‘welfare queens’, referring to women who collect grants and spend the money on themselves rather than on their children (Hassim, 2006: 120). Such accusations toward CSG recipients were often felt by participants interviewed for Paper IV, sometimes causing stigma, but also sometimes challenged or resisted. Impoverished people receiving social welfare are often stigmatized as ‘scroungers’ on the tax payers’ hard earned income. These conservative moral discourses are not restricted to South African welfare politics but exists globally (Lister, 2004; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Roelen, 2019) and from a South African perspective, Hassim (2006) argues that they crowd out rights-based arguments for social security.

Another recurrent discourse in South Africa concerns the concept of dependency and the notion that cash transfers such as social grants promote dependency on the state, and causes a “dependency culture” (Seekings & Natrass, 2015; Surender *et al.*, 2010; Meth, 2004). The preoccupation among African political elites surrounding dependency (Seekings, 2017) is an important dimension of the political contestation of cash transfers in the public domain. Dependency has elsewhere been described as one of the most crucial terms in social policy and welfare reform, since the fear of creating dependency is a base for strong conservative objections to cash transfer programmes around the world (Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Dependency is perceived by critics of welfare programmes as demoralizing for work ethic, promoting laziness instead of being active and taking initiatives. Thus, the implications of this discourse for recipients of the CSG is stigmatization as undeserving lazy welfare recipients, which is argued to be a strong form of misrecognition affecting dignity negatively (Hochfeld & Plageron, 2011, 2017). Research refutes the notion that the impoverished unemployed would rather prefer surviving on social grants than to find a job. Rather than the motivation characteristics of grant recipients or the grant system itself, the problem lies in the labour market and wider economy, a significant lack of demand for low-skilled labour. (Surender *et al.*, 2010). Other common objections to cash transfers are that they lead to misuse of the money e.g. on alcohol or drugs, or as mentioned generating perverse incentives such as increased fertility rates, and is thus seen as anti-development (Hochfeld, 2015; Devereux, 2011; Lund, 2008). Cash transfers are regularly conceptualized as ‘handouts’ by politicians (Surender *et al.*, 2010), who argue they lead to a loss of dignity for people who have to rely on the state instead of enjoying more dignified ways of making a living, i.e. wage labour. This discourse is not bound to state representatives, it also exists in the popular consciousness, as well as being fuelled by the media (Wright *et al.*, 2015). Ferguson (2015, see also Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Meth, 2004) argues against

this conception by stating that the poor are always dependent, on family and others, and in fact, workers all around the world are very much dependent on their employers, are poorly paid, and often work under precarious working conditions:

Cash transfers, in this perspective, do not introduce “dependency” into a social world that had been innocent of it; rather, they enable less malevolent sorts of dependence to take root and a circuit of reciprocities to unfold within which one-sided relations of dependence can become more egalitarian forms of interdependence. (Ferguson, 2015:138)

This literature is further discussed in Paper III where we delve deeper into the social and relational effects of cash transfers on individuals within households and at the village level. Ferguson’s points become central when Paper III empirically studies the effects of the moral discourse of ‘dependency’, provides nuance and problematizes it in relation to its antithesis ‘independence’, from the perspective of those who receive a cash transfer.

### 3.4 Cash transfers and state-citizen relationships

An underdeveloped part of the literature on cash transfers concerns how cash transfers shape and affect state-citizen relationships (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018; Plagerson *et al.*, 2012), for example, how and in what ways cash transfers can promote citizenship or affect recipients’ sense of entitlement (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016). This section introduces the concepts used in Paper IV that explores how cash transfer recipients see, encounter and interact with the state (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005) as well as notions of grants as entitlements contra charity.

Concerning the state, this thesis limits analysis to explore how the state manifests itself through social grants in rural villages. The state is not one homogenous entity, but rather, large and differentiated. Aspects of the state are visible to people in their different *encounters* with the state (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005), primarily (but not only) through the delivery of social grants to rural households as well as through the application process. As shown in the Paper I and IV, the state as seen from the rural villagers in Cutwini and Manteku, occupies an ambiguous role as both provider and restrictor of livelihoods.

Cash transfers in South Africa are directly targeted at categories of people deemed needing assistance, such as poor women with children, pensioners, and people living with disabilities. The current system emanates from the normative assumption of the centrality of wage-labour and the notion of employment as the basis on which to claim entitlements. This has been termed the ‘citizen-worker nexus’ (Barchiesi, 2011) and it is evident in South Africa’s

welfare system. It shapes the boundaries of how far cash transfers extend because of “the ‘productivist’ notion that access to social entitlements needs to be founded first and foremost on the attainments of the independent, self-activating, employed able-bodied citizen worker” (Du Toit & Neves, 2014:841). Expansion of social grants to the unemployed able-bodied working age population (e.g. adult men) has not yet been seriously considered by the government, in part due to the fear and worry of welfare leading to ‘dependency’ amongst the working-age poor and fears of creating a ‘culture of entitlement’ (Surender *et al.*, 2010; Barchiesi, 2011; Marais, 2011).

The concept of entitlement is here defined as a benefit that cannot be taken away arbitrarily, something the recipient has a right to and can therefore claim (Calhoun, 2002). The opposite of entitlement is charity, which is here defined as a benefit that is voluntarily and benevolently bestowed upon someone in need, but is fundamentally insecure in that there is no legally justified claim for the receiver (Calhoun, 2002; Spicker *et al.*, 2007; Cookson, 2018:39). When applied to state cash transfers, entitlements are crucially dependent on legislation and often even constitutionally protected rights (Liebenberg, 2007; Devereux, 2011). As mentioned earlier, South Africa’s comparatively progressive Constitution supports entitlements to income support such as social grants. The Constitution therefore incorporates not just negative rights, restraining state power but also includes obligations for positive rights, such as socio-economic rights (for instance social grants) (Liebenberg, 2007). Nonetheless, research has pointed to discrepancies between constitutional rights on paper and the perceptions of recipients who might not feel protected by a legislated entitlement, and instead perceive the social grants as being benevolent charity that can be withdrawn by decision-makers (Hochfeld & Plageron, 2011; Plageron *et al.*, 2012; Hudson, 2016). This reinforces the need to inquire into how entitlements are understood by those receiving a cash transfer, again going beyond a formal and legal entitlement to social security. A more ‘emic’ approach on how and whether recipients’ express a sense of entitlement (Ferguson & Li, 2018; Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018), but also the ways in which recipients’ potentially *enact* a sense of entitlement in the event of a failure in the distribution of a cash transfer, which is discussed in Paper IV. This is crucial in shedding light on and uncovering ways in which people encounter the state and the ways cash transfers can strengthen state-citizen relations including imbuing recipients with a sense of citizenship (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016). The cash transfer literature has often been inattentive to broader issues of politics and power and the literature on the politics of social protection suggests that:

Analysts and policy makers alike need to pay more attention to factors such as whether or not there is political will to actively support these initiatives, whether

institutionalised political parties exists, whether human resources and bureaucratic capacity are adequate to the task, and whether civil society has the capacity to mobilise and form strategic alliances. All these shape the possibilities for fostering active citizenship and the ability to hold power holders to account. (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016:1095)

These conditions for fostering a sense of citizenship in the South African context are elaborated on in relation to state-citizen relations in Paper IV as well in the discussion chapter.

The concept of the welfare state typically includes public education, health care, housing and various forms of income support to protect the wellbeing and health of its citizens (Seekings & Natrass, 2015). This thesis however limits the analysis to the direct income support of state cash transfers. Income support from the state entails that citizens' rights to an income becomes independent of market forces and participation in the labour market (de-commodification), as well as independent of family relationships (de-familisation) (Esping Andersen, 1990, 1999). De-commodification underpins the concept of social citizenship (Seekings & Natrass, 2015), which is defined by Marshall in his seminal work as a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community with a right to a modicum of economic welfare and security (Marshall, 1950).

However, there is also a need to understand the perspectives and experiences of those who actually receive a cash transfers from the state. Encountering the state through the application for a social grant or through delivery of grants are times when impoverished rural populations potentially can gain *recognition* as rights-holders. As Leisering argues, "turning poor persons into rights-holders reflects a social recognition by politics and society, in addition to the mere fact of receiving money" (Leisering, 2019:148). This recognition can potentially strengthen their sense of citizenship through a smooth, effective, secure and dignified process (Devereux, 2013; Hudson, 2016). This is important as in South Africa there is growing "recognition that legal citizenship is important but not enough for real inclusion in the political, economic and social life of post-apartheid society" (Plageron *et al.*, 2012:979; see also Kabeer, 2005). Constitutional rights therefore need to be translated into a *de facto* lived experience for rural villagers and in that way strengthening recipients' parity of participation (Fraser, 2003) in life. However, I argue that forms of *misrecognition* affecting a sense of citizenship can also be visible in encounters with the state. This is exemplified in events of recipients finding money missing through unlawful deductions (in this case a state induced indignity through a private sector actor—Paper IV), not receiving the cash at all at the specific pay point. It could also be exemplified by being forced to wait in queues for an extraordinarily long time under adverse weather conditions, or experiencing mis-

treatment and abuse by government officials during application processes (Wright *et al.*, 2015; Vally, 2016; Balen, 2018; Torkelson, 2020).

Several authors have discussed how cash transfer and welfare scheme implementation concretely affects notions of entitlements and a sense of citizenship (Plagerson *et al.*, 2012; Molyneux *et al.*, 2016; Carswell *et al.*, 2019). As a particular form of state-citizen relationship, the act of waiting in queues to collect or apply for a cash transfer is one way in which in the poor see and encounter the state. Auyero (2011) describes how recipients of welfare learn to be patient and comply with state officials as voicing complaints might result in not receiving the money. ‘Waiting for the state’ through being forced to wait in and around the welfare office therefore affects people’s perception of entitlements, where they see the cash transfer as charity rather than a right. Arbitrariness, uncertainties and manipulation of people’s time in encounters with the state thus create docile and subordinate ‘patients of the state’—those who do not complain, rather than active citizens (of the state) (Auyero, 2011). The double meaning of the word *patient* comes from the recipients of cash transfers, which described the waiting in the welfare office as similar to a public hospital: “In both places they have to (silently) endure; they have to act not as citizens with rightful claims but as patients of the state” (Auyero, 2011:23). These processes are also gendered in that women are most often the ones forced to “queue in the sun” (Balen, 2018) and thus state bureaucracy and pay points of cash transfers can be sites of stigma and reproduction of inequality (Auyero, 2011; Cookson, 2018; Vally, 2016). However, grant recipients various acts of agency to potentially challenge and to hold power holders to account, are also an ethnographically important vantage point in studying state-citizen relationships (Carswell *et al.*, 2019; Bayat, 2013) as explored in Paper IV. The literature detailed above which describes different forms of encounters with the state is used in this thesis as a lens into how cash transfer implementation can affect wellbeing in positive and negative ways, through the potential reproduction of stigmatisation or acts as forms of recognition or misrecognition in terms of a sense of citizenship for recipients (Carswell *et al.*, 2019).

To sum up, this chapter has outlined the conceptual framework used in order to explore the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers, on different levels (individual, household, community, and state-citizen level). The conceptual framework used Fraser’s concepts of *redistribution* and *recognition* and linked them to the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in rural South Africa. As Ulriksen & Patel note, “social justice is a central thrust against which to assess state interventions” and taking a social justice perspective entails understanding welfare provision such as the CSG not just in material terms (as economic redistribution) but also in relational and

symbolic terms (in terms of equal recognition of individuals and groups) (2017:202-203, see Hickey, 2014). The benefits of using Fraser's concepts stem from the combination of analyzing both dimensions of economic as well as socio-cultural injustices. Her engagement with issues surrounding welfare policy from a feminist perspective makes her work useful for understanding issues related the CSG, a welfare intervention with strong gender dimensions. In assessing a state intervention such as the CSG from a social justice perspective on a micro level, there is a need for a combination of methods, which takes the local context as a starting point (Patel & Ulriksen, 2017). The next section presents the methodology used, drawing on Fraser's concepts to explore the material and socio-relational implications of the CSG in the rural villages of Cutwini and Manteku.



Photo 1: Grant payday in Cutwini 2016, showing how social grants are collected in the village. The white truck is the cash dispenser car.



Photo 8: Literally "seeing the state": State SASSA-car accompanying the mobile cash dispenser truck during grant payday in Cutwini, should there be any questions and grievances regarding grant payment.

Photo 2a, b: Grant payday market in Cutwini. During payday in the village, the market place along the main road is full of life and people (the two photos below).





Photo 3: The village of Cutwini lies relatively isolated and 2-3km from the Indian Ocean, surrounded by grazing lands and (mostly abandoned) fields.

Photo 4: Parts of Manteku village, showing the steep terrain and the river mouth of Mzintlava.





Photo 5: Street sign outside the small town of Bizana close to Lusikisiki showing the mainstream approach (agriculture) to poverty eradication and rural development, with a smiling former President Jacob Zuma and two local politicians.



Photo 9: One of the participants in the interview study (left) and my interpreter Zoleka Mazinyo (right). With permission.

Photo 6: What is left of the horticultural development project in Manteku.



Photo 7: Rainwater tank in Manteku, attached to a downpipe from the tin roof.





Photo 10: My interpreter and key informant Bongani Mlotywa and son in Cutwini. With permission.



Photo 11: My key informant Bongani's household where I was lodged during the fieldwork in Cutwini.

## 4 Methodology

This chapter first outlines the research design that was chosen in order to explore the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in two rural communities in South Africa. The methods used for data collection and analysis are then presented and discussed. Following that, I reflect on the process of the research as well as on my role and position as a researcher.

### 4.1 Research design

In order to explore the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers in two rural communities in South Africa a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

The fieldwork had two phases. In the first phase I engaged in a follow-up study of a survey performed in 2002 (Hajdu, 2006), investigating long-term livelihood changes in the two villages. My role in that phase of the research project was to conduct the household survey in 2016 and engage with the data analysis and writing of Paper I and II. In the second phase, which lasted between 2017 and 2018, I decided to explore social and relational effects of the CSG at individual, household and community level, as well as how different encounters with the state through the CSG affect state-citizen relationships. Paper I and II employed a mixed-method approach (relying on the household surveys but incorporating qualitative data from interviews) and Paper III and IV used qualitative methods (primarily interviews, but also observations). Paper III and IV, however, was also heavily informed by the household survey results, especially on background information on the households and the overall picture of the importance of social grants for the vast majority of households.

As also mentioned in chapter 2, exploring the long-term effects of cash transfers in these two villages is possible due to the existence of unique household survey data from *all* households in both villages from 2002. The

purpose of doing the follow-up household survey 14 years later with all households in the two villages was three-fold and relates to RQ 1 (How have rural livelihoods changed in the study sites between 2002–2016 and in what ways has the CSG contributed to long-term effects on rural livelihoods?). Firstly, surveying all the households in both villages provided us with detailed current background information on various aspects of the households, and allowed me to introduce myself to every household. This was valuable in gaining access to the community for the sub-subsequent interview phase. The prolonged stay in the villages during the survey phase provided me with a stronger understanding of the context for the later stages of interviews. Secondly, the survey enabled us to understand how livelihoods have changed over the last 14 years, and primarily, how livelihood activities have changed in relation to each other. The use of the 2002 survey (in Hajdu, 2006) provided a baseline to compare and reflect on changes in livelihoods. Thirdly, the survey enabled us to investigate potential long-term productive effects of the CSG on livelihoods by comparing and analysing households that had received a significant amount of CSG with households that had received no or only a small amount of the CSG over the 14 year period (2002–2016).

RQ2 (What are the social and relational effects of the CSG at individual, household, community levels?) was addressed primarily through interviews with CSG recipients and observations. RQ 3 (How do encounters with the state through the CSG affect state-citizen relationships, including notions of entitlements to the grant?) and was addressed similarly through observations (primarily in relation to collection of social grants at various pay points in Cutwini and in the nearby town of Lusikisiki) and interviews with CSG recipients. The interviews provided a deeper knowledge of lived experiences and access to participants' representations and understanding of the perceived role of social grants in the participants' lives in relation to individual subjective changes, social relations within the household and community, as well as state-citizen relations. The observations during paydays were important as they are moments of encounters with the state where both *recognition* and *misrecognition* can potentially take place. This included the general atmosphere during that encounter and day as well as how the processes of collecting grants looked in different locations. For example, how and in what way access to social grants were done in a smooth, effective, secure and dignified way for recipients. Together, the qualitative fieldwork thus relates to socio-relational implications of cash transfers in terms of potential improved social status of individuals (e.g. dignity, respect and wellbeing) and enhanced sense of citizenship (*recognition* outcome) to participate as peers in social life.

I have moved back and forth between empirical observations and theory in my explorations on the material and socio-relational implications of state cash transfers. This deliberate iterative process has provided new insights and new questions for the data collection and has allowed me to adjust the data collection to changing circumstances (Olivier de Sardan 2015). For example in 2017 the so called ‘SASSA crisis’ occurred resulting in among other things in a transition to a new service provider of the implementation of grants (2018), massive queues for CSG recipients etc. (explained more in depth in chapter 2 and Paper IV). The SASSA crisis provided an opportunity to study the sentiments and experiences of CSG recipients who had long been accustomed to smooth distribution of the grant and to theorize about in what ways encounters with the state through the CSG affect state-citizen relationships, including recipients’ notions of entitlements to the grant. The iterative process was particularly important for the direction of Paper IV where the strategy of doing fieldwork during several occasions thus became important in order to allow me a chance to reflect on new concepts as well as follow the process over time concerning the changing of service provider.

The body of literature on the impact of cash transfers in poor households is dominated by large-scale quantitative impact evaluations (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). However, these evaluations often have little to say about, or have paid less attention to, contextual specificities and lived experiences of the recipients who receive state cash transfers (Patel & Ulriksen, 2017). In this sense, a state intervention such as the CSG can have ripple effects in that it can have wider effects than those originally intended (on child well-being), for example relational implications of social justice for recipients. The potential unanticipated consequences for recipients is another example that closed-ended questionnaires (or randomized control trials) often do not capture, which qualitative methods are more apt to do (Olivier de Sardan & Piccoli, 2018; Ulriksen & Patel, 2017). Combining quantitative with qualitative methods in this thesis was therefore important as it can shed light on both the contextual factors in which cash transfers occur, as well as further the understanding of how the CSG recipients exercise agency in a constraining environment characterized by jobless de-agrarianisation.

The different methods used in this thesis answer different questions. Mixing methods also offsets any inherent weaknesses or limitations of relying only on e.g. surveys, interviews or observations (Pozarny & Barrington, 2016; Robson, 2011). Employing a multi-method design by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods in a study is increasingly seen as beneficial in understanding the role and effects of cash transfers in the lives of impoverished populations (Pozarny & Barrington, 2016; Ulriksen & Patel, 2017). However,

while the use different methods allow for triangulation from different data sources and thus can create a richer picture, it is still only a “partial understanding” (Nightingale, 2009) of the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers.

## 4.2 Data collection methods and analysis

This section will elaborate on the methods chosen in order to explore the material and socio-relational effects of cash transfers, in particular, the household survey and semi-structured interviews. The empirical data in this thesis consists of a household survey of *all* 273 households in two villages and an additional 33 in-depth semi-structured interviews together with extensive field notes and observations taken during fieldwork spaced out between three years, 2016–2018. The fieldwork took place in March–May in 2016, March–April in 2017, and November of 2018. The data collection methods and the research process however needs further elaboration.

### 4.2.1 The household survey

The first stage of the fieldwork began in March 2016 with the follow-up household survey on all households in the two villages (roughly 230 households in 2002, now 273). Both in 2002 and 2016 the household survey included all households in both villages. In order to get permission to conduct the survey in the villages, both Flora Hajdu, the principal investigator of the collaborative project, and I first discussed the research with the primary village headman in both Cutwini and Manteku. In both Cutwini and Manteku, Flora Hajdu was known and remembered from the previous survey in 2002 (and subsequent fieldwork visits) and had well established contacts in the study sites. This enabled me to gain a rather quick acceptance and effective start of the fieldwork before Flora left two days later. The discussion with headmen included explaining important ethical issues such as the research was affiliated with the government of South Africa in any way, what research purposes we had and that no material benefits would accrue neither to the village as a whole or to participants in the research, and that participation was purely on voluntary basis. After gaining permission from the headman, every household received the same information before deciding whether they wanted to participate or not. They were also told that they would remain anonymous in the writing up process. A significant part of the survey focused on the introduction of Child Support Grants that has taken place in between 2002 and 2016. The survey took around an hour per household with the help of interpreters using a similar

questionnaire to the one Hajdu (2006) used in the same villages in 2002, with extra questions on changes since 2002 and spending of grant money (see Appendix 1 for complete household survey). With the permission of the headmen, and the association to the previous survey, getting people to participate in the survey and welcoming me and the interpreter in their homes did not pose a problem, nor was it difficult to get permission to do interviews with the households. 174 households were included in the household survey in Cutwini in 2016 (146 in 2002). 99 households were included in the household survey in Manteku in 2016 (87 in 2002).

Similar to 2002, the household survey phase employed local fieldwork assistants in both villages. The local fieldwork assistants interpreted the survey to the households surveyed and had a good general knowledge of the village. The assistants during the survey phase were local villagers who had been to secondary school and spoke English and were unemployed or worked only temporarily during the year. Four people in total per village were recruited, one man and one woman (Bongani and Zoleka who later became my interpreters during the interviews, see interpretation section) and two younger women in Cutwini and one woman and three younger men in Manteku. Bongani and Zoleka in Cutwini and Nokuzola in Manteku (all in their 40s) acted as 'coordinators' for the younger assistants (in their 20s) during the survey phase as they were older and had previous experience of surveying and interpretation. It took two to three days of training per village with the questionnaire (explaining the aim and getting the questions right, including translating them to the local language and checking that all the assistants interpreted words and questions in the same way) before we made a pilot survey in two households and then revised the questionnaire to its final form. During the training, I also made it clear that the assistants would have to take ethical considerations into account and any sensitive information shared should stay between us. The use of local fieldwork assistants could in cases like that be problematic but in general there were not that much sensitive issues in the survey. Many villagers also remembered the 2002 survey. The benefit of using local fieldwork assistants in their ability to gain quick access to households as they are known and trusted in the community outweighed any potential disadvantages. In total, the household survey took around six weeks to complete in both villages. The questionnaire used for the survey (roughly 10 pages long, see Appendix 1) included questions on household size (including all members of the household, their ages and how often they physically stay in the household), formal or informal jobs/activities, remittances, social grants, use of natural resources, energy sources, assets, agriculture and animal ownership, health, perceived feelings of livelihood

security, perceived changes in the last 14 years and use of grant money (if applicable).

We started at one point of each village and used GIS maps of the villages from Hajdu (2006) in combination with new satellite images of the village and worked our way through the villages systematically until all households had been surveyed. I was present in the beginning of the survey during introductions where we explained the research purpose and the first 15 minutes of the survey in all households surveyed, in order to get a grasp of the household interviewed and answer any questions that arose. Once the assistant started with asking questions and filling them out in the questionnaire in isiXhosa, I then proceeded with another assistant to the next household (and so on). While some of the questions were simple check-box style, others required free-text answers that were written down by the assistants. The household survey thus had an in-depth, detailed and in some ways qualitative character and could be described as a mix between a survey and a very structured interview. After each day, we had a debriefing session where we talked about any problems that arose during the day and if we needed to go back the next day for follow-up questions.

Conducting the household survey gave me a chance to get to know the villages better as I visited every household<sup>9</sup> in both villages. I received a glimpse into their life situations and livelihood activities. After having introduced myself in every household, it was also much easier to come back for subsequent interviews in the years after. The time spent in both villages during the household survey phase also gave me a better understanding of the village contexts for the following phases of interviews and observations in 2017–2018. During both the survey phase in 2016 and the interviews in 2017–18, I lived in the villages at the different field assistant's household. In total, I have spent around 6 months in the villages for the fieldwork between 2016–2018. With the permission of the headmen, and the association to the previous survey, getting people to participate in the survey and welcoming me and the interpreter in their homes did not pose a problem, nor was it difficult to get permission to do interviews with the households. 174 households were included in the household survey in Cutwini in 2016 (146 in 2002). 99 households were included in the household survey in Manteku in 2016 (87 in 2002).

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<sup>9</sup> Two homestead that at the time were long-term absents from the village of Cutwini were excluded.

#### 4.2.2 Selection of participants for semi-structured interviews

From the database with the household survey data in 2016, I purposefully selected households for in-depth interviews in one of the villages, Cutwini using primarily a purposive sampling strategy but occasionally combined this with convenience sampling. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling aimed at sampling participants in a strategic way—meaning the participants are relevant to the research question posed. A convenience sampling is simply the participants available by chance for the researcher (Bryman, 2012). From the household survey in 2016, I purposively selected CSG recipients in one village, Cutwini, for in-depth interviews in 2017. I chose a random mix of participants ensuring that they were spread evenly across the span of: 1) how many CSG they received (between 1–7) and 2) their age, ranging from 19-year-old recipients up to 60-year-old. I also made sure that I did not get a skewed selection in other respects, e.g. wealth. In general, there is not a large differentiation in wealth or educational status among the CSG recipients. All of the CSG recipients were women but informal discussions with men occurred throughout the research, including one interview with a man who held the position of ward committee member in Cutwini. All of the CSG recipients who participated in interviews were women (in these villages there are no male CSG recipients), in concert with the strongly gendered nature of care in South Africa.

#### 4.2.3 Interviews and observations

In addition to the household survey, I have used semi-structured interviews with CSG recipients and observations during paydays and other important event to capture the social and relational implications of social grants (RQ2 and 3). The purely qualitative part of the fieldwork allowed me to dig deeper into the participants' lived experiences of the CSG as well as participants' encounters with the state.

In total 33 audio-recorded semi-structured in-depth interviews in Cutwini were completed during fieldwork in 2017 and 2018 along with many informal discussions and observations. Semi-structured interviews entails undertaking an interview with a list of fairly predefined open-ended questions or themes in an interview guide (see Appendix 2), but with the flexibility to stray from the interview guide and explore other issues coming up (Bryman, 2012). As a tool of establishing knowledge, interviews are important in providing access to participants' representations and understandings of a topic, the actor's point of view (Olivier de Sardan, 2015). This is linked to the notion of 'lived experience', often used in social policy/social protection literature (McIntosh & Wright, 2019:452; Fisher *et al.*, 2017). A common definition of this concept is:

Lived experience involves representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge...[it] responds not only to people's experiences, but also how people live through and respond to those experiences. (Boylorn, 2008:490)

As McIntosh and Wright argue in terms of social policy research, inquiring of lived experiences are important and relevant as they often "are shaped and mediated by policies, policy-related discourses and the practices of front-line welfare agencies". (McIntosh & Wright, 2019:452). This is relevant from a South African perspective in terms of how the participants live through changes in policies, and how public discourses and practices at welfare agencies such as rural SASSA offices can potentially affect their dignity.

The interviews were thus an important tool in eliciting the lived experiences of the participants. The interviews lasted between 40 to 90 minutes. For the interviews in Cutwini, I relied on two interpreters, one man (Bongani) and one woman (Zoleka), who also had been part of the household survey, to translate from isiXhosa to English. We went through the interview guide together beforehand and discussed different ways of phrasing the questions so they would make sense to the participants. Afterwards, we did two pilot interviews and listened through them together (all three) in order to make sure that the questions were phrased optimally. Listening through interviews and discussing interpretation and answers was done during the regular interviews as well. On occasion, in the evenings Bongani and I undertook shorter debriefing sessions where we listened to an audio recording of the interview (or a shorter section of the recording which needed explanation) and discussed certain aspects of what was said and how it could be interpreted.

With the exception of five interviews, which were done in English (and required no interpretation), interviews were conducted in isiXhosa and interpreted simultaneously by a local trained translator. In 2017, for most of the interviews the interpreter was a woman (Zoleka), but in seven of them a man (Bongani) interpreted. Apart from my interpreters during the survey and the interviews, there are a number of English speaking members of the village (mainly young people with further education and some elders who use to be migratory workers). The local interpreters also worked as assistants during the household survey done in 2016, and were trained extensively to undertake the interpretation for this research. Although life history interviews were not the specific methodology used, many participants in the study elaborated on 'then and now', that is, changes over time from when there had been no CSG (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017).

In 2018, eight additional audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were done (together with several informal discussions with previous participants in Cutwini during a shorter fieldwork of two weeks before our dissemination activities (see below). These last interviews were done after much of the data analysis had been conducted and thus could focus on factors that had come up in the analysis and needed further probing. Some interviews were with the same participants from the year before; others were with new participants using a convenience sampling of households that had the characteristics needed to complement the data (Bryman, 2012). Bongani translated all the interviews in 2018. The follow-up interviews with previous interviewees provided me with another chance for member-checking (Creswell, 2014) to make sure I had understood answers correctly. The follow-up interviews in late 2018 also allowed me to ask new questions regarding changes from our last interview, especially concerning being forced to collect grants in the town of Lusikisiki in the aftermath of the SASSA crisis and changes in service provider.

During the fieldwork periods in the villages in 2016 (~three months), 2017 (~ two months) and 2018 (2 weeks), I made many observations of village life. Important observations were made during paydays when social grants are collected in the village or in the closest town of Lusikisiki. Field notes were taken on a consistent basis and became important in noting down different observations. In relation to paydays, I noted for example who was there (women/men, young/old etc.), who queued up in lines, how people behaved, the general atmosphere, and how the process of collecting one's grant looked in different locations (in village or town). The observations of payday have been particularly important for answering RQ3 on state-citizen relationships and are elaborated more in Åaper IV.

#### 4.2.4 The dissemination trip

After the last fieldwork in 2018 in Cutwini, my supervisor Flora Hajdu arrived for the final dissemination activities in both villages as the project was coming to an end. During the dissemination meetings in the villages, we reported back and discussed the findings of the household survey with the villagers during two open meetings, one in each village. The dissemination trips to the villages provided a chance for member-checking (Creswell, 2014) of the findings from the survey phase (allowing those who participated at the meetings to get the chance to elaborate on our results). These meetings were also important in order to present results back to the village so that they know what came out of the survey and the possibility to take necessary steps of action if they want. For example, we provided the village council with an updated list of households and

an anonymised list of reported health problems, which can be used to argue for better access to health services. Together with the South African co-investigators in the project, David Neves and Tessa Hochfeld, we also held a dissemination seminar (in East London, Eastern Cape, at the ECSECC (Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council). To this seminar policy makers, social workers and researchers were invited and we presented and discussed our results from both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the project with them.

#### 4.2.5 Data analysis

The transcribed interviews were read several times in order to gain familiarity with the texts, including field notes from interviews, informal discussions and observations during paydays. I then coded the transcribed interviews together with field notes manually in themes (Creswell, 2014). I generated initial codes manually based on the different answers the participants gave which was then later brought systematically together under themes drawn from the research questions and grouped under the different levels—i.e. individual, household, community and state-citizen level effects. Particular attention was paid to themes that arose recurrently or deemed interesting in terms of the research questions, as well as any emerging themes that were unexpected or surprising. The process was iterative, moving back and forth between theory and the transcribed interviews in order not to omit important aspects on different implications of cash transfers (Creswell, 2014). The analysis of the 2017 interviews (25 interviews) also had the advantage of being checked for any over-interpretation or misinterpretation by the co-author of Paper III (my late co-supervisor Tessa Hochfeld). She was a senior South African researcher and our discussions of transcripts and the emerging themes became a form of “peer debriefing” (Creswell 2014). Teamwork and collaboration in this sense served as reciprocal checks on each other’s readings and understandings (Olivier de Sardan, 2015). Although computer software such as NVivo was used in order to extract and order interview quotes, coding was done manually in Paper III (myself in collaboration with Hochfeld) and Paper IV (myself). A description of the data analysis for Paper I and II is provided below.

In order to assess the relative value and importance of livelihood activities (in Paper I), the data calculations drew on a common metric for analysis, the imputed monetary value of various livelihood activities aggregated at village level. Both monetized, income earning activities and ‘un-monetised/remunerated’ activities (e.g. subsistence agriculture) were valued and aggregated for the purpose of comparing their relative value to each other. To be able to do this we used both data from the survey but also detailed discussions

with the assistants to which I contributed, for example on how often someone sells their produce, what they earn when they do so etc. Our collective detailed knowledge of the field sites in our research team was key to being able to take relevant decisions on how to impute value to activities such as ‘fishing twice a week’ or ‘cultivating five types of vegetables for own consumption’. During several meetings 2016–18, we had long discussions within the research team as well as with the local assistants on what was reasonable to assume in terms of values in relation to livelihoods. For more information on the calculations made, see Paper I.

The data analysis on the productive effects of the CSG for Paper II used a regression analysis, which sought to investigate the correlation between number of years of CSG receipt with a selection of households’ productive assets; investments in pigs and poultry production; investments in horticultural production for household consumption or sale; holding a stable job; or running an informal enterprise. Paper II used a metric of comparison that reflected how much CSG income households received since 2002. The measure constructed, Child Support Grant Receipt Years (CSGRY), comprises the maximum number of years any given household would have received CSG income, if they had applied for, promptly and continuously received the CSG at the point of grant eligibility. In that way, we could compare households that had received a significant amount of CSG to households that had received only small amount of the CSG between 2002–2016. The research team took in the help of a colleague, a trained economist (Amuakwa-Mensah), to do the regression analysis. Before the regressions were performed however, the team had detailed discussions with him in order to select which the indications for productive long term effects could be, how to deal with different aspects of the CSG (such as expansion of eligibility over the years and increase in sums), and other important factors for the analysis. The results from the regression were interpreted jointly in the team and discussed during the dissemination meeting where certain processes could be confirmed during interviews (for example the fact that women used rotating savings associations to save money and buy assets from the CSG). For more information, see Paper II.

### 4.3 Ethical considerations

Doing research in poor communities and with people living in poverty demands ethical approaches by the researcher. Standard practices such as explaining the aim of the research before doing a survey or an interview, stressing that it is voluntary and that participation can be withdrawn at any stage and that no material benefits will be gained by participating were followed. This was

explained in a village meeting before the survey started as well as before each household was surveyed and before each interview. All interview participants were promised confidentiality and accorded pseudonyms. All of the participants granted oral consent and written consent forms (explained verbally to everyone regardless of their literacy skills) were used for interviews as well as in the survey (Robson, 2011, see consent form used for both survey and interviews, in household survey in Appendix 1).

As Madden argues, “ethnography doesn’t have an ethical element—ethnography is an ethical commitment from the very outset and through all phases of ethnographic research and writing” (Madden, 2010: 34). Although I did not provide any payments to interviewees for participating in interviews, it was important to contribute to the community by presenting the results of the survey during the dissemination visit in the villages. Living in the villages allowed me to contribute to the local economy by purchasing goods at the local spaza shop as often as possible, employing local assistants and interpreters during the fieldwork, and paying local families for housing.

#### 4.4 Positionality and reflexivity

Even though I put a lot of time in order to build trust and rapport with the people I engaged with, there could, however still be issues that my informants chose not to speak to me about for various reasons or issues I potentially misinterpreted due to my ‘social/cultural blindness’ of being an outsider. My position as a researcher and foreign man needs to be acknowledged and dealt with as part of the fieldwork, as it may also affect the research result. Inherent power hierarchies between researcher and participant cannot be fully overcome, instead they need to be analysed and problematized as shaping the research on all levels. This is especially the case with regards to how my ‘whiteness’ (but also my gender and foreign status) may have influenced what people say to me (or don’t say) and their own agenda for participating in the research. In the South African context, where the history of racial oppression and tensions still lingers, white means being privileged (Swartz, 2011). Although this positionality needs to be acknowledged, one way in which I at least mitigated that was through spend a prolonged period of time in the field sites, doing repeat visits with participants, and partaking in activities that do not only surround the research topic, such as village meetings, football practice or discussions at *spaza* shops. Although I always was, and always was seen as privileged, my position as a researcher in the study sites became more normalised after a while when the villagers became used to seeing me around during the time I spent surveying the households together with research assistants in 2016. An ‘end-of-survey party’ held in both

villages was also important in establishing a stronger rapport, especially in Cutwini, where I later returned to for the interviews in 2017 and 2018.

Within anthropology, “turning one’s gaze away from the obvious influence of subjectivity in ethnography is simply ignoring the elephant in the corner”. (Madden, 2010:23). Issues of subjectivity and potential researcher influence over the results were therefore taken into account during the research process. New insights have occurred throughout the research and my own assumptions have sometimes been challenged by the fieldwork, forcing me to rethink (‘step back’ to theory and return with new questions or look at a phenomenon from a different vantage point). During for example the interviews, I sought not to let my own pre-conceived ideas of what would be important in regards to the socio-relational implications of the CSG influence or intrude on my analysis. Rather than shying away from certain answers or not registering certain answers as not important, I saw these as important contributions to gaining a deeper understanding of the different implications of the CSG.

An example of this from the interviews concern a common answer to the question of why the participants thought the CSG was introduced in the first place. In many cases the answer turned out to be ‘so that people would stop throwing away children’, which to me was surprising but something that I continued to probe in the other interviews as well as with my interpreters (see Paper IV). This challenged my preconceived idea that the participants would mention the struggle under apartheid or post-apartheid attempts at addressing poverty as the primary reason for the existence of the CSG. To be sure, some participants also mentioned this but the most common answer was with regards to stop the previous phenomenon of ‘throwing away children’ (explained more in detail in Paper IV). As the social world is messy and complex, mitigating biases through presenting counter-examples or contradictory statements is important in qualitative research and improves the validity of the final written product (Olivier de Sardan, 2015; Creswell, 2014). This is exemplified in both Paper III and IV where counter examples are presented in terms of how the CSG is perceived as affecting gender relations within households and as well in terms of the diverging views regarding entitlements to the CSG.

## 4.5 Reflections on translation and interpretation

The fact that the interpreters are people from the village has its advantages and disadvantages, as they are trusted and known in these rather small communities, but it could also pose problems if there are personal issues I don’t know about between the interpreter and the interviewee. Additionally, being aware of the political views and opinions of the interpreter was important when it comes to

issues regarding the social grants and the sub-sequent analysis (Bujra, 2006). I tackled this through discussing the issues with the interpreters to know more about their personal views, as well as discussing beforehand during the training of the interpreters about the importance of not interfering with the views of the participant. I also used a professional external transcriber of the audio-recorded material. The external transcriber (who speaks isiXhosa) was able to provide the entire interview in transcribed text, both questions and answers in both isiXhosa and English and not just the English translation. This helped in checking any bias or mistakes in interpretation by my two interpreters. Nevertheless, using interpretation entails the danger of something getting lost in translation, or the loss of subtle meanings in the process. This is of course true with any form of interpretation and therefore thorough preparation and training with the interpreters tried to mitigate the worst forms of misinterpretation (Bujra, 2006). In general, the interpretation during the interviews was however very good and the external transcriber (via email) even commended my key informant and interpreter Bongani for especially effective and good (unbiased) interpretation. Using an external interpreter from a university would probably not have been as successful in ‘opening doors’ for me during the fieldwork as my two local interpreters were. However, my limited knowledge of isiXhosa was of course a limitation to this thesis. My knowledge of isiXhosa only extended to courteous opening phrases, intended to be an ‘ice-breaker’ for participants who were shy to talk to a white researcher, which it also succeeded in doing from time to time.

The role of my key informant and interpreter Bongani needs some further elaboration, as he has been a source of much important deliberation and discussion in this research process. He is around 45 years old and a relatively well-educated and knowledgeable person in the community, who regularly explains the culture and history of Pondoland to English-speaking tourists through his hike-guiding business. He has done interpretation for a long time, including working with my supervisor during her fieldwork in Cutwini since 2005. For this thesis, he represents both an important ‘door opener’ during the fieldwork, an interpreter during interviews, as well as an interlocutor for explaining issues surrounding cultural aspects of life in the village (Olivier de Sardan, 2015). I lived primarily in Bongani’s household in Cutwini, we interacted on a daily basis and I spent most evenings with him and his family. However, in order not to rely on one key informant too much, I engaged in similar conversations around topics I found interesting with Zoleka and the younger assistants in Manteku. Zoleka interpreted the majority of interviews with the CSG recipients in 2017.

To end this chapter I will describe an ordinary evening during my fieldwork in Cutwini in April 2016, which presents a glimpse of the village context from my position.

*The village cattle roam free alongside the village road out towards the spacious grazing areas close to the Indian Ocean. On our way home down the road from a long day of surveying another set of households, my interpreter and key informant Bongani and I pass the cattle and turn in to the village spaza shop for some refreshments. The spaza shop contains much of the standard food groceries a household needs, but also supplies the village with cold drinks, in particular beer, as many households still don't own a fridge. Four men are there drinking beers, sitting on empty beer crates. We greet them and I buy some airtime for my phone and some refreshments for ourselves. "They are always thirsty", says Bongani with a smile when we get outside again. The sun is starting to set and after a ten-minute walk we reach the end of the village where I live in a rondavel (circular hut) in Bongani's homestead. As usual, the village is rather quiet and the atmosphere can be described as somewhat calm. Just outside of Bongani's homestead lies the village football pitch. The only noise here comes a half-hour later when I participate in a practice session with the local football team, which consists of young men and boys from the village before quickly washing up in a bucket of water from the rainwater tank and joining Bongani and his family for the evening dinner. Same as almost every day the family and I watch two popular South African soap operas Scandal and Rhythm City on TV at around 7pm, sitting in the living room lounge furniture eating our dinner. I pay Bongani's wife Dumisa the weekly amount for housing me in their home, including her cooking. Although she receives some income from cooking food for tourists occasionally, that income is irregular and the only regular independent income she has is her CSG. After the soap operas have finished I say good night to Bongani, Dumisa and their son and walk out to the rondavel where I sleep. The darkness has now overtaken the village but lights are visible in most households. The rondavel contains a large-size bed, a plastic chair and small table. Electricity is available through an electric socket to recharge my phone. At around 9pm the village is quiet.*

Bongani's household is certainly not one of the poorest in the village. He has managed in the last few years to acquire both lounge furniture and a TV and fridge due to his income from organising hiking tours along the coast. However, electric stoves, fridges and TVs are more and more common these days in households in Cutwini and Manteku. When the first survey of these villages was

done in 2002, accessing electricity was only a development plan, not to be realised for another decade, and lounge furniture was reserved for the few households that were well off. Other things about the village, like the grazing cattle, the men drinking beer, the evening football practice and washing up in a bucket, remains the same (Hajdu, 2006).

## 5 Summary of papers

This chapter includes a brief summary of the most important results of each paper in this thesis. As mentioned in the introduction, the four papers seek to build on each other to contribute to the overarching aim through addressing different steps and levels of analysis. Firstly, through an in-depth understanding of the long-term rural livelihood changes that have taken place in these villages the context is set for exploring the role and implications of the CSG (Paper I). The material livelihood effects of the CSG are explored over time with a specific focus on possible long-term productive effects for recipients (Paper II). The analysis then shifts to the lived experiences and perspectives of CSG-beneficiaries: the social and relational implications of the CSG at individual, household and community levels (Paper III), and finally, the implications on state-citizen relationships and of the notions of entitlement to state resources that recipients feel as a result of receiving the CSG (Paper IV).

### 5.1 Paper I: Changing livelihoods in the Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002–2016): Diminishing employment and expanding social protection

The results from Paper I show that impoverished households in the study sites in rural Eastern Cape have experienced increased continued jobless deagrarianisation (a process described in more detail in chapter 3) since 2002. This is especially the case with waged employment, which has significantly decreased, especially in Manteku. Although local employment in 2002 was erratic and poorly paid, it represented a significant livelihood activity. In 2016, we found fewer jobs, however those that exist in the public or private sector are today better paid, which points to increased social differentiation within the villages. Although important for cultural and identity reasons, agriculture in 2002 was not a significant livelihood activity in terms of its contribution to

monthly incomes, and its importance in 2016 had slightly decreased. Furthermore, the nature of agricultural activities had changed with field cultivation basically ceasing totally, at the same time as homestead food gardening decreased only slightly with some household strategically adapting to focus on more high-value horticultural production for their own use or sale. However, rising food prices makes specialization of certain crops like vegetables more valuable and a potential source of income for smallholders in the future. The paper, nevertheless, points to the unlikely reinvigoration of agriculture as a *main* livelihood activity in rural Eastern Cape.

In contrast to the directly redistributive role of social grants for households, Paper I elaborates on a number of failed state and donor-funded development projects over the last 14 years such as agricultural development and micro-finance. Few if any contributed to any form of sustained development in the villages due to a paucity of local consultation and understanding of rural lives and livelihoods, often ignoring wider structural constraints of Eastern Cape. For example, in Manteku, an R670 000 EU-funded horticultural nursery was established, but through lack of community ownership and lack of planning for project sustainability the nursery soon fell into disuse and as can be seen in photo 6 is now overgrown and abandoned. This has caused resentment towards donor or state-driven projects aimed at creating agricultural or economic development. The abandoned horticultural nursery is now referred to locally as a ‘white elephant’, i.e. an expensive but useless possession.

Rural livelihoods are still diverse, but due to decreased waged employment opportunities and the continuing decrease of smallholder agriculture, the villagers have become more reliant on social grants for survival. Calculations presented in a pie chart in Paper I of relative importance of livelihoods at the village level show that local employment accounted for 59–59% (Cutwini/Manteku) of local livelihood value in 2002 but had decreased to 32–23% by 2016, while cultivation had decreased from 5%–5% (Cutwini/Manteku) to 3%–2%. Social grants had simultaneously increased from 15–16% to 45–48% by 2016. The increase of social grants as a proportion of livelihoods activities is significant and social grants have come to underpin livelihoods in these villages today, including contributing to keeping local small self-employment activities running. Analysis from the household survey showed a significant decrease in self-reported worry regarding food security in the household in 2016 compared to 2002. In 2002, a majority of households reported worrying about not having enough food to eat ‘all the time’ but in 2016 a majority of households claimed to only worry ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’.

From the villagers’ point of view, the state thus occupies an ambiguous place as it both seen as restricting livelihoods (often blamed for the loss and lack of

employment opportunities) while simultaneously providing social grants on a large scale. However, social grants were never intended to be the sole/main income for households and are (as of yet because the design and the actual amounts) insufficient in significantly improving living standards in these villages. In times of jobless de-agrarianisation however, social grants prevent many households from sinking deeper into poverty and deprivation.

## 5.2 Paper II: Cash transfers for sustainable rural livelihoods? Examining the long-term productive effects of the Child Support Grant in South Africa

The aim of Paper II was to explore and examine the potential long-term productive effects of the CSG using the household survey data between 2002 and 2016. The results show, through a regression analysis, that households that had received cumulatively more CSG income between the years 2002–2016 (relative to households that had received less or no CSG) were more likely to invest in productive assets such as small ploughs used for gardening and weeding, fridges and rain water tanks that save labour time for women (see photo 7), and poultry, staple crop and vegetable production. Reflecting the opportunities for horticultural production for local resale, there was a positive correlation between larger diversity of crops cultivated in the garden and increased CSG receipt. The findings showed that the women who receive more than one or two CSG per month could accumulate part of this income in local rotating savings groups and in that way be able to invest in more expensive assets such as water tanks, stoves and fridges. These assets save time and labour for the women, and are thus both productive and increase well-being. The fact that women control the money and are able to buy items that they prioritise is also a sign of their increased control over money and decisions.

However, the regression analysis found no correlations between receiving more CSG and larger impacts such as finding employment or being able to engage in informal enterprises or petty trade. The overall conclusion was that, the cash transfers had some positive long-term livelihood effects, but were not able to significantly improve recipient's livelihoods or transform livelihoods in the long term. Although cash transfers alone do not produce sustainable livelihoods or provide a pathway out of poverty, the findings regarding the productive effects of the CSG on households is remarkable as the grant was never intended to produce such effects. The fact that the CSG is a regular and predictable income is a strong factor in producing productive effects for households. It is also notable that the many different costly rural development

interventions discussed in Paper I in these villages never managed to improve livelihoods in the long term, or increase agricultural production.

### 5.3 Paper III: 'That Child Support Grant gives me powers': Exploring social and relational aspects of cash transfers in South Africa in times of livelihood change

Paper III explored the perceived socio-relational implications of the CSG through the lived experiences and perspectives of the women interviewed in Cutwini. Although contradictions and inconsistencies existed, the results from the paper shed tentative light on changes and social dynamics due to the CSG. On an individual level, the CSG, as an independent, unconditional income, has had micro-level transformations by CGS recipient's increased feelings of dignity and respect both within the household and in the community. Out of the 33 interviews with CSG-recipients, almost all pointed to an increased sense of dignity due to CSG-receipt. The isiXhosa word of *isidima* (meaning dignity and respect) was often referenced in conjunction with the CSG and the role it played in the lives of the women interviewed. The CSG recipients in this paper describe how the CSG can create some tensions in the household with their husband/partner, especially if he is not working, but more often nowadays, the grant was seen by most as contributing to the entire household, and conflicts surrounding the grant within households had declined. Due to widespread unemployment, the CSG represented one of the primary (and the most regular and predictable) incomes in the household for many of the interviewed women. They elaborated on increased feelings of independence or autonomy, of not having to rely too much on family members or parents-in-law. In these households, the reversed dependencies (where social grant recipients' are the main breadwinner in the household rather than other wage-working adults) have significant implications on household dynamics, for example, in reducing unequal gender relations through CSG recipients' increased decision-making and bargaining power. The CSG however, is not transformative in gender relations more substantively as the gendered division of labour is unaffected. Women are still overwhelmingly more responsible for unpaid care work and household labour. The CSG is seen in these rural areas as a women's grant and some participants reported that in the case of young unmarried couples, the CSG could act as an excuse for men not to provide income maintenance for their biological children living in other households. In that sense, the CSG might in fact reinforce the gendered social reproductive role of women.

The regular and predictable payments of the CSG had major effects on relief from worry and stress for recipients when it comes to household expenditure,

but also strengthening their livelihoods in terms of being able to plan ahead. At the community level, the paper also describe women’s increased engagement in rotating savings and credit associations (so called *stokvels* or *umngalelo*) due to the CSG, which strengthens social networks. Many mentioned that they appreciate being able to use the CSG to help others in need and referred to solidarity and *ubuntu* (an African philosophy based on principles of sharing, solidarity and reciprocity)—in this sense the CSG becomes a facilitator of solidarity in times of livelihood change. Nevertheless, the paper also highlights the very small sum of the CSG and that many are unable to use the grant for anything other than basic and immediate household needs. Solidarity and sharing are important, but such informal social protection is uneven and claims on resources are often an outcome of contestation, negotiation and relations of power.

#### 5.4 Paper IV: "They are not leaving without their money": Exploring encounters with the state through cash transfers in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Paper IV explored how encounters with the state through cash transfers shape state-citizen relations in Cutwini. The paper builds on literature that advances an understanding on how state cash transfers can act either as a vehicle for strengthening a sense of citizenship, dignity, and entitlements or reproducing inequality, stigmatization and shame. The paper draws on Fraser’s concepts of recognition and misrecognition to explore participants lived experiences of applying and accessing social grants from SASSA. Observations during paydays were important as they were moments of encounters with the state where both recognition and misrecognition can potentially take place. In particular, the paper explored recipients’ notions of entitlements in relation to receiving cash transfers, as well as their lived experiences of encounters with the state through social grants service delivery, both before, during and after the ‘SASSA crisis’. The huge task of delivering social grants, state cash transfers, to millions of impoverished households was in jeopardy during a crisis within the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in 2017. The risk of non-payment of social grants have been described as a crisis of majestic proportions in the media, which could severely affect the lives of recipients, local economies throughout the country, as well as the post-apartheid state of South Africa and the ruling party ANC.

The paper explores the issue of how the CSG shapes state-citizen relations through interviews and observations during 2016-2018. During the interviews, mixed views were presented regarding notions of entitlements to the CSG. Some recipients expressed views of grants as a form of charity, as help for the helpless

now that there are no jobs and people are struggling. However, a growing sense of entitlement to social grants were more present, both in the views of participants and the actions during the transition to the new service provider, the South African Post Office, in 2018. In general, the younger generation were more aware of their rights to social security. Social grants are now undoubtedly an everyday part of life in the village, a norm, and this contributes to an emerging sense of entitlement. The state is seen as taking ‘ownership’ of every child, which is a form of recognition of a right to a decent standard of living.

However, the younger CSG recipients also complained about mistreatment by state officials, enduring insults and experiencing pejorative terms, such as *imali yeqolo* (‘lying down on your back-money’, implying women have children just in order to receive a CSG). This is a form of misrecognition that affects their dignity in negative ways. CSG recipients’ encounters with the state through social grants have during 2017-2018 meant uncertainty concerning whether or not grants will be distributed and extraordinary queues once the new service provider took over grant payments. However, encounters with state bureaucracy are also avenues where the impoverished see the state, enact a form of agency and gain recognition, which contributes to a sense of citizenship.

## 6 Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the results presented in Paper I–IV above in relation to the aim and research questions of the thesis. The aim was to explore the material and socio-relational implications of cash transfers for impoverished households in a changing livelihood context in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa. Three sub-questions were addressed in relation to the overarching aim:

**Sub-question 1:** How have rural livelihoods changed in the study sites between 2002–2016 and in what ways has the CSG contributed to long-term effects on rural livelihoods?

**Sub-question 2:** What are the social and relational effects of the CSG at an individual, household, community level?

**Sub-question 3:** In what ways do encounters with the state through the CSG affect state-citizen relationships, including notions of entitlements to the grant?

This thesis shows, through the longitudinal household data, that jobless de-agrarianisation is an ongoing process and has continued unabated between the years 2002–2016 in the studied villages. While livelihood portfolios are still diverse, jobs have declined dramatically in recent decades. In that sense, the occupational shift away from agriculture with a potential transition to waged employment is difficult for rural populations in these contexts. The massive increase of social grants underpin livelihoods in rural Eastern Cape, but are often undervalued or understudied in livelihoods literature in the former homelands of South Africa. While acknowledging the declining role of cropping, livestock and gathering to the household economy, and that agriculture is no longer the main source of livelihoods for rural South Africa, Hebinck *et al.* (2018) argue that such activities still have important economic and lifestyle contributions that rural villagers find significant. Thus, there is a “transforming agrarianism” (*ibid.*:324)

occurring in which there is consumptive use of the landscape rather than a productive use, in which a more apt description would be a rural lifestyle rather than an agrarian lifestyle these days. This reconceptualization enables a rural landscape that combines cultural, emotional, psychological, and community values, where the rural home becomes of enhanced importance as a setting that holds strong cultural values (*ibid.*). Such reconceptualization from an agrarian lifestyle to a rural lifestyle seems to be happening in the study sites as well.

In this context of mass-unemployment and declining cultivation, social grants, have both protective and productive effects on livelihoods (Paper I–III). While CSG is only meant for child related costs, it serves to protect the entire household from falling deeper into poverty and deprivation (Paper I–III). In times of jobless de-agrarianisation, social grants are often the major income in poor households in the studied area and can thus be regarded as an important tool for poverty alleviation in rural South Africa. While Paper II highlights the limitations of small cash transfers to significantly improve long-term livelihoods in rural Eastern Cape, it also shows the strategic use of grant income by recipients for making small, improvements to their livelihoods over time, improvements that, to the women, were important and labour-saving. The productive effects of the CSG are noteworthy in a South African context where the grants are not meant to have such effects. The CSG is only meant to help impoverished households with child related costs, such as food, school uniforms and transportation to school. Thus, the potential wider long-term productive effects of the CSG are understudied in the literature on social grants in South Africa, which tends to focus on child related outcomes (DSD, SASSA, UNICEF, 2012).

This thesis further discusses the role the CSG plays in changing social relations in the village of Cutwini. While cash transfers are mostly ameliorative and do not tackle the structural roots of poverty, there is a need to not play down potential micro-level subjective changes for individuals that can come from the receipt of unconditional individual income like the CSG. In Paper III we elaborate on the positive impacts of the CSG on ‘intangible’ dimensions of deprivation or poverty. These are increased dignity or relief from worry and stress in relation to CSG income, as well as discussing how the CSG has equalizing tendencies on gender relations within household, especially how the CSG contributes to enhancing women’s decision-making and bargaining powers (Patel *et al.*, 2015). Those who traditionally had less economic power in the region (women and pensioners) are today an important source of distribution, both within households and village. These reversed dependencies are evident in Cutwini and have significant implications for CSG-recipients (and pensioners) and on household dynamics.

Conversely, the negative socio-relational implications of the CSG are noteworthy. While Paper III expands on the dignity and respect that the CSG offers participants in this study within households in the village, CSG recipients are also confronted and faced with misrecognition and forms of ‘othering’ (Lister, 2004) through the persistent negative moral discourses around CSG receipt that permeates their lives (especially the younger participants in this study). Many participants in this study are keenly aware of and feel disrespected through negative stereotypes of CSG money such as *imali yeqolo* (‘lying down on your back-money’—implying that the women have children in order to receive the money), but also through disrespectful encounters with SASSA officials where (especially younger women) are questioned whether they are deserving of this money. This is both a form misrecognition of their social status as full partners in social interaction but also affects their sense of entitlements to the grants. Even for some CSG recipients, like Thembi in Cutwini, who can laugh away such allegations (Paper IV), it is still a form of detrimental treatment, affecting their dignity and is a form of stigmatisation. Being able to lean on the constitutional right to the CSG as a claims-based entitlement is here a powerful tool for women like Thembi.

Nevertheless, we show in Paper III that the CSG also relieves unwanted and unfavourable dependence on family or the community and, in that sense, CSG recipients achieves a valued sense of autonomy. The CSG, however, is not transformative in gender relations more substantively as, for instance, the gendered division of labour is not affected. In these field sites the CSG, might in fact reinforce the gendered social reproductive role of women, a conclusion noted in elsewhere as well in relation to cash transfers (Olivier de Sardan & Piccolli, 2018; Molyneux, 2006). Likewise, apart from access to rotating savings associations, the CSG does not affect other power relations on community level (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). This is evident in for example access to important community level decision-making processes, for example, village ward committee or being included in decisions on who is included in livelihood projects such as public employment schemes.

The state, as seen from the villagers’ point of view, occupies an ambiguous role, as it is both seen as restricting livelihoods (frequently blamed for the loss and lack of employment) while simultaneously providing social grants on a large scale (Paper I). As the example of the research assistant Sino (Paper IV) shows, there are different gendered “sightings of the state” (Corbridge *et al.*, 2005). Sino who can’t find employment and has to rely on his mother’s pension see the state as a restrictor of his livelihood opportunities when his income stream for holiday tourists was according to him abruptly removed by the forced demolition of holiday cottages (for coastal preservation reasons) in Manteku by the state. In

the equation of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in post-apartheid rural South Africa (characterized by mass unemployment and declining small-holder agriculture), Sino and other young low-skilled unemployed men represent, in terms of income opportunities, the ‘losers’, as they are not eligible for grant receipt themselves, but rather become reliant on grants indirectly. “God giveth and God taketh away, but the Government only taketh away” was his despondent evaluation of the post-apartheid state. The example of Sino is important as he said it while assisting with the household survey in 2016, which clearly points to the importance of social grants in this village, and only days after payday of social grants in Manteku. Payday of grants, as described in the introduction, represents a very different ‘sighting of the state’, the more ‘caring’ state, but one that is experienced more directly by women and the elderly. Sino, despite enjoying some of the benefits of the grants indirectly, could not see the state in the role of provider due to his previous experiences and current situation.

In terms of how the CSG affect state-citizen relationships and the participants’ notions of entitlements to the CSG, I show the complex relationships where views of social grants as charity exists simultaneously with expressions of grants being viewed as entitlements. The actions and views expressed by the recipients of grants point to the contentious character of social grants in rural South Africa today. I argue that the impoverished villagers in rural Eastern Cape are neither ‘powerful’ claimants on the state (harbouring a view that they are claiming their rightful share of state resources, as discussed by Ferguson, 2015) nor docile ‘patients’ of state charity (Auyero, 2011). Ethnographically exploring encounters with the state through delivery of social grants is important as it can shed light on potential (mis)recognition in terms of social citizenship as well as reproduction of inequalities and stigmatisation for CSG recipients. I show that both misrecognition and reproduction of inequality and stigma have occurred, but also that the encounters with state bureaucracy are avenues where the impoverished get to see the state and be seen by the state, gaining recognition, which contributes to a sense of social citizenship. Being forced to wait for long stretches in queues (evident in the town of Lusikisiki, and elsewhere in South Africa) can be interpreted as a malevolent act of power by the state, as manipulating poor people’s time (Auyero, 2011). It can also be seen as a sign of lack of investment from the state in infrastructure needed to provide access to social grants in a dignified and effective way. However, the act of waiting in queues can also be seen and interpreted from another vantage point by drawing on Bayat’s concept of ‘quiet encroachments of the ordinary’ (Bayat, 2013), as a potent form of activity or agency by the claimants of social grants, demanding a response and recognition from the state (Paper IV).

When large-scale social welfare programs are introduced (such as the CSG as a constitutionally protected social right), they are not easy to abolish as public expectations of such entitlements grows (Murray Li, 2009). A potent civil society, which acts as a watchdog to hold government to account should social grant payment be at risk, is important (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016). The massive attention from both civil society organisations, such as Black Sash, the national media and the Constitutional Court during the SASSA-crisis of 2017–2018 (Torkelson, 2020) showed how an “assemblage of actors” (Murray Li, 2009, 2017) pushing the state to fulfil its constitutional obligations (Torkelson, 2020). Similarly, organised protests from the organisation Black Sash where grant receivers’ hold up signs saying, for example, “100% of my grant money belongs to me” (in reference to the widespread problem of unlawful deductions from the cards of grant receivers) point to a strong sense of entitlements to social grants in South Africa. Although these organised protests are primarily an urban phenomenon, I argue that many rural grant receivers, through acts of “quiet encroachments”, are also, in a quieter way making their presence felt. This was especially the case during the transition to the new service provider, the South African Post Office, in 2018 where recipients of social grants were effectively “blocking up” pay points of social grants, for example supermarkets, ATMs at banks, gas stations, Post Office, in Lusikisiki on payday. A mass of people together enacting a form of agency, which certainly did demand attention and action, as explored more in detail in Paper IV. These actions and complaints from CSG recipients regarding failure to provide state service delivery is, as Corbridge argues, how a sense being a citizen is built up (Corbridge, 2007). Present day South Africa thus has many of the conditions or requirements for fostering ‘active citizenship’ where, as Molyneux *et al.* 2016 puts it, “welfare recipients begin not only to ‘see the state’ but also engage with it and challenge it where it falls short of expectations” (Molyneux *et al.*, 2016:1090).

## 6.1 Concluding discussion on implications of the CSG and payday

A common theme discussed in all four papers is that the role of the state, primarily through the redistribution of social grants, is crucial in sustaining livelihoods in times of jobless de-agrarianisation in rural former homelands in South Africa. The state is likely to remain prominent in the years to come in the absence of decent employment (the ‘post-wage existence’) for the rural impoverished populations in South Africa, as also discussed by Williams (2018). Social grants, like the CSG, are key to survival in impoverished communities like Cutwini and Manteku. Indeed, a new dynamic has appeared in the face of

mass unemployment, as Ferguson argues: “the conditions associated with *losing* a steady income (illness, old age, disability, needing to care for small children) are now, for many, more likely to appear as the only plausible way of *obtaining* one in the first place” (Ferguson, 2015:16, *emphasis added*).

Nevertheless, the role of the state in South Africa as a prominent provider of livelihoods via cash transfers cannot be generalised easily or straightforwardly to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as few countries have the same kind of distributional welfare regime (Seekings and Natrass, 2015), nor the technical and financial capacity of the South African state. Nevertheless, the results from the Paper I speak to broader changes and dynamics taking place across the global South, with similar processes of receding prospects of employment and agrarian change (Standing, 2002; Ferguson & Li, 2018; Hickel, 2016). While cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa differ significantly in terms of design and implementation, the thesis contributes to the growing literature and impact evaluations of cash transfer schemes across Africa (Davis *et al.*, 2016; Fisher *et al.*, 2017; Daidone *et al.*, 2019). The contributions in Paper II and III to this literature is through the focus on longitudinal effects on livelihoods combined with qualitative insights and in-depth contextual understanding, which show both poverty reducing effects, the mostly positive social and relational effects for recipients and the limitations of cash transfers being able to significantly change recipients’ lives on their own.

Social welfare, in the form of cash transfers, is seldom acknowledged as central to rural development policy in South Africa. Ignored by “the ‘production-oriented’ and agriculture-centric nature of much rural development” (Neves, 2017:43), the importance of social grants for poverty and livelihoods has until recently been undervalued by policy makers. An example of this from the fieldwork are seen in photo 5, which is a photo of a half-torn street sign located outside the town of Mbizana, close to Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape. The sign which comes from the local municipality says “Poverty eradication through rural development” and includes a picture of former South African president Jacob Zuma happily waving to the viewer together with two smiling local politicians in front of a tractor, the tractor being a classic signifier of “rural development”. It represents the mismatch between what policy makers and politicians assume or hope shall happen to rural areas and the reality of previously failed agricultural development programs (including tractors) in the field area, which Paper I and chapter two describes. I argue that in the post-apartheid era, the primary tool of ‘rural development’, defined here as increased wellbeing for the previously marginalised, has been social grants.

Social grants in South Africa are targeted primarily at pensioners and primary care givers of children, which means that many non-disabled working aged adult

South Africans living in poverty are unable to claim a social grant. While expanding the social security system with an unconditional basic income to all, discussed in South Africa previously (Marais, 2011), would no doubt have great benefits in strengthening livelihoods in these study sites, our results caution against assuming that solely providing a small income in itself could produce sustainable rural livelihoods. To achieve this, structural changes to the economy and society would be needed, where cash transfers coupled with other complementary public policy interventions could create a comprehensive web of social security (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). The widespread poverty stemming from the historical legacy of apartheid and colonialism and the resulting structural constraints, for example malfunctioning education, infrastructure and economic opportunities, in the region demands structural change *in addition* to comprehensive social security (Adesina, 2011; Devereux & McGregor, 2014).

Drawing on the works of Fraser, I argue that the CSG is a significant form of *redistribution* in South Africa and in particular for the livelihoods of impoverished in rural Eastern Cape. The CSG is the bedrock of household income for most of the participants in this study. The CSG and other social grants thus have redistributive outcomes that affect their standard of living positively. However, it does not fully satisfy Fraser's notion of social justice as parity of participation through redistribution (having the material resources to participate as peer in society). The CSG sums are too low to make a significant impact on poverty or change the structural conditions or roots of poverty. In this sense, Fraser's notion of participatory parity as a definition of social justice demands structural change in society, what she calls transformative changes in the economy. These include "universalist social-welfare programmes, steeply progressive taxation, macroeconomic policies aimed at creating full employment, a large non-market public sector, significant public and/or collective ownership, and democratic decision-making over basic socio-economic priorities" (Fraser, 1995:85). Thus, while social grants have had a great impact in the lives and livelihoods of the participants in these study sites, the broader context of socio-economic inequalities in South Africa prevents these small grants from significantly changing their lives.

Nevertheless, the *redistribution* outcomes of the CSG are linked to important social and relational dimensions of *recognition* in this study through among other things, the dependability and regularity of the payments. This produces less worry and stress for caregiver recipients and in turn strengthens their livelihoods by allowing them to save and plan ahead for their households, as argued in Paper III. The dignity and respect (*isidima*) that the CSG offers for many participants of this study is in itself a form of *recognition*, which

strengthens their social standing both within households and within villages. Similarly, the dignity and respect it gives the CSG recipients in these villages produces in turn better opportunities for social networks within the village, leading to strengthened social inclusion in the village. One important example from this research is how the CSG enables or strengthens many participants' capability to enter into rotating savings associations, so called *stokvels*. Being part of a rotating savings group has material implications for the household (being able to purchase productive investments for the household, Paper II), but is also a source of social network for the recipients (Paper III). The above are poignant examples of the interlinkages between *redistribution* and *recognition*, and CSG can thus be argued to improve participatory parity for CSG recipients.

The fact that the social grants are targeted can sometimes have negative implications for the recipients' wellbeing and dignity. A key disadvantage of what Fraser calls affirmative remedies to economic injustices (i.e. targeted social assistance programmes such as the CSG) is that they can create a *misrecognition* backlash, by marking the recipients as "inherently deficient, always needing more and more" (Fraser, 2003:77), which add insult and disrespect to the fact that they are living in poverty. This is visible for participants like Nombeko and Thembi who have to endure insults when applying for the CSG by state officials or in the wider community, as described in Paper IV. Transformative remedies, on the other hand, such as universal social welfare programmes, would not create this kind of stigmatisation (Fraser, 2003). Thus, the CSG contributes to the dignity of the recipients in several ways, but the stigmatising public discourses, and their sometimes disrespectful encounters with state officials, simultaneously affects their dignity negatively.

Concerning state-citizen relations, as Naila Kabeer *et al.* (2013) notes regarding the livelihood concerns for impoverished informal women workers, "the struggle for social security was also, to some extent, a struggle to gain recognition of their status as citizens" (Kabeer *et al.*, 2013:27). Their struggle is framed under a combination of the politics of redistribution and recognition for a more responsive state and expanded notion of citizenship. This is similar to points made already in Bank & Minkley (2005), reviewing livelihoods in the Eastern Cape, in which they argue that the rural poor in Eastern Cape demand stronger state action and intervention, for wealth creation and rural improvement (Bank & Minkley, 2005). This is an important reminder of the links between *redistribution* and *recognition* and how a seemingly ameliorative redistributive tool (a state cash transfer) can also have symbolic and longer-term implications and importance. This is true for the structurally unemployed in Cutwini and Manteku as well. The social grants have produced an (albeit small but not insignificant) form of precondition for strengthening livelihoods in the villages.

This struggle for recognition of their status as citizens includes waiting in queues for social grants (Paper IV). Waiting in queues here reflects “waiting for recognition” as full citizens (Carswell *et al.*, 2019:613). A wait that have often been fairly short and dignified (as observations during payday in Cutwini 2016–2017 suggest, Paper IV) and access to social grants since the introduction of the grant in these villages in 2002 have greatly improved according to the participants. However, as Paper IV argues, the last few years have seen an unprecedented crisis in the implementation of the South African social security system, which has led to significant worry and stress for the participants in this study. Although so far the money has arrived, the changes in service delivery of grants led to greater costs for recipients to claim their grants (through being forced to travel greater distances) as well as being forced to wait in extraordinarily long queues in the town of Lusikisiki. These implementation issues surrounding access to social grants for the recipients and participants’ encounters of mistreatment from state officials are forms of *misrecognition* affecting their dignity.

## 6.2 The promise of payday

Payday of social grants is the primary way in which the state manifests itself for impoverished rural villages such as Manteku and Cutwini. Providing social grants to the impoverished rural populations of South Africa on a monthly basis is a huge state apparatus and investment, which involves a lot of technical capacity and resources. For poor rural villages such as Cutwini and Manteku, grant payday represent the *beating heart* of the local economy in deep rural South Africa, at the margins of the South African economy. This is true both directly for the eligible households and for recipients but also indirectly for the wider local economy through the ripple effects on petty trade, transportation and services.

Payday of social grants is simultaneously a promise and an act of *redistribution* and *recognition*. It is literally the day when the most direct redistribution of economic resources takes place in rural South Africa, from the wealthy to the poorest. It is also a day where social grant recipients’ can potentially gain recognition of their status as citizens. The promise of payday in that sense reflects the promise of an increased sense of citizenship, strengthening the status of being a full member of a community with a right to economic welfare and security (Marshall, 1950). As Surender (2019) notes, Marshall’s conception of social citizenship demands social rights in addition to civil and political rights and as poverty inhibits individuals from “full participation in society as citizens, a social right to state provision of welfare is necessary to ensure all could be full stakeholders” (Surender, 2019:46). This is similar to Fraser’s notion of partici-

patory parity, social arrangements that strengthen impoverished individuals' possibilities to participate as peers in social life (Fraser, 2007). Fraser also holds that there can be no democratic citizenship without social rights (Fraser & Gordon, 1992).

The monthly payday of social grants is when significant *redistribution* and *recognition* is visible in Cutwini and Manteku. The Merriam Webster dictionary definition<sup>10</sup> of a promise is: a) a declaration that one will do something specified b) a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or to claim the performance of a specified act and c) a ground for expectation of improvement. The title of this thesis reflects the promise of payday for the participants in this study. Payday represents for the participants both a promise of concrete material and livelihood outcomes as well as wider social and relational outcomes and generate expectations of improvements. However, the promise of payday is also a constitutional obligation of the state, a promise to deliver social grants in the hands of recipients on this particular day(s) in a dignified, effective way. A promise often fulfilled, but, as seen in recent years, also a fraught and contentious promise, sometimes unfulfilled.

Thus, the CSG in Cutwini and Manteku is not simply an economic transfer of cash, which keeps individuals in households and communities afloat, it also becomes part of, and reshapes, social relations. This is the case both in terms of social relations in the household and community, but also for state-citizen relations. The potential for recipients to gain recognition of their status as citizens is an important symbolic implication of social grants.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/promise>.

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## Popular science summary

Many of the world's poor live in rural areas, where various poverty reduction projects and efforts have often failed to make a significant contribution to helping people find a lasting livelihood or reduce poverty. Since the turn of the millennium, the discussion on poverty reduction has come to focus more on the construction of social security systems and the use of cash transfers as poverty reduction tool. However, opposition to the idea of wider forms of cash transfers has been widespread. Part of the critique of cash transfers is that the money is mainly used for consumption and thus does not have a long-term effect on livelihoods, and that cash transfers create a dependency culture and damage the dignity of the recipient.

The purpose of this research project is to see if small cash transfers can have long-term effects on livelihoods by evaluating the effect of Child Support Grants (CSG) in two rural villages in South Africa. The Child Support Grant in South Africa is a means-tested unconditional cash transfer and go to primary care giver of children under the age of 18 and represent a smaller amount of money, about R420 per month per child. This study is based on data from 2002 when a household survey in the villages was carried out just before households began to have access to Child Support Grants. By doing a follow-up household survey in 2016 in this project, it became possible to compare households that received a lot or little CSGs over the years to see if there is any difference in their long-term livelihoods.

In-depth interviews with selected households have been used to explore connections between CSGs and livelihood activities. The results of the interview studies also show the effects of the CSG other than the purely material ones—effects on social/relational level and effects on people's feelings of being citizens with rights. These effects were explored with further follow-up interviews and observations.

The follow-up survey clearly showed how living conditions have deteriorated in the two villages since 2002 in terms of employment and that agriculture has

become so unprofitable that most of them stopped growing staple crops. The state old age pension and the CSG during the period studied have helped to prevent people from falling deeper into poverty and deprivation. The calculations show that the households that have received comparatively high amounts of CSG also to a greater extent have invested in productive assets (for example tools for vegetable cultivation), have more chicken and grow more different kinds of vegetables than other households. The interviews also showed that the women used CSG money through informal savings associations in order to invest in e.g. rainwater tanks, which saves a lot of time and labour. However, the analysis could not find any link between CSG and having a more stable job or running successful micro-enterprises. The women also reported that the income from the CSG meant a great deal to their sense of independence and dignity, contrary to the argument that the cash transfers create a dependency culture and harms people's dignity. Being able to give their children food every day and sending them to school, or being able to help a neighbour in need contributed to the feeling of dignity, and not having to depend on the goodwill of others contributed to a sense of autonomy. The women emphasised that, with the money, they could participate more in the village community through social networks such as informal savings associations. The money has also had a positive impact on gender equality in households, since women's independent income meant not being dependent on men's or other relatives incomes, while the lack of jobs now increasingly meant that men became dependent on the income of women and the elderly.

The social grants are very important sources of income in rural South Africa in times of high unemployment and declining agriculture. The CSG, however, also has more far-reaching implications. Interviews and observations show that people in the villages are increasingly beginning to feel that they are citizens with rights and have legitimate reasons to expect something from the state even when they have no work. Although perceptions of the CSG being a form of charity from the state exists, the interviews mainly showed that grants are increasingly seen as rights.

While the thesis provides evidence that the CSG had some positive long-term livelihood effects for many rural households, this far from shows that cash transfers offer a pathway out of poverty and towards sustainable livelihoods. Indeed, the interviews illustrate the difficulties in creating long-term, sustainable enterprises or acquiring employment in a context of deep poverty. Small cash transfers alone can therefore not be expected to move recipients out of poverty.

The conclusion of this thesis is that the South African cash transfers such as the CSG make a big difference in the lives of poor people. However, cash transfers need to be coupled with other complementary public policy interventions in order

to create a comprehensive web of social security, structural change and economic opportunities in order to support the poor and vulnerable in building sustainable long-term rural livelihoods. For the recipients though, cash transfers contribute to increased dignity, wellbeing and autonomy for the recipients. In addition, the cash transfers can have a positive effect on the recipients' sense of being seen by the state and being recognised as citizens with rights.



## Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Många av världens fattiga bor på landsbygden, där olika projekt och insatser för fattigdomsbekämpning ofta har misslyckats med att på ett avgörande sätt bidra till att människor kan hitta en varaktig försörjning. Sedan millennieskiftet har diskussionen om fattigdomsbekämpning kommit att fokusera mer på byggandet av sociala trygghetssystem såsom kontantstöd. Motståndet mot idén om bredare former av kontantstöd har dock varit stort. Kritik mot idén om kontantstöd har bland annat varit att pengarna främst används till konsumtion och därmed inte har en långsiktig effekt, samt att bidragen skapar ett beroende hos mottagare och skadar deras värdighet.

Detta forskningsprojekt har som syfte att se om små bidrag kan ha långsiktiga effekter på försörjning genom att utvärdera barnbidragets effekt i två byar i Sydafrika. Barnbidragen i Sydafrika är inkomstbeprövade och går till dem med barn under 18 år och utgör en mindre summa pengar, ca 275kr per månad per barn. Den här studien bygger på data från 2002 då en kartläggning av hushållens försörjning i byarna genomfördes precis innan hushållen började få tillgång till barnbidrag. Genom att i detta projekt göra en uppföljande datainsamling 2016 blev det möjligt att jämföra hushåll som fått mycket eller lite barnbidrag genom åren för att se om det finns någon skillnad i deras långsiktiga försörjning.

Djupintervjuer med utvalda hushåll har använts för att belysa orsaker och samband mellan barnbidrag och försörjningsaktiviteter. Resultaten från intervjustudierna visar också på andra effekter av barnbidragen än de rent materiella – effekter på sociala/relationella plan samt effekter på människors känslor av att vara medborgare med rättigheter. Dessa effekter utforskades med ytterligare uppföljningsintervjuer och observationer.

Den uppföljande enkäten visade tydligt hur levnadsvillkoren försämrats i de två byarna sedan 2002 med avseende på förlust av jobb möjligheter och att jordbruk blivit så olönsamt att de flesta slutat odla stapelgrödor. Den statliga garantipensionen och barnbidragen har under den studerade perioden bidragit till att hindra folk från att falla djupare in i fattigdom. Våra beräkningar visar att

de hushåll som fått jämförelsevis mycket barnbidrag har också i högre utsträckning har investerat i produktiva tillgångar som t.ex. kultivator för grönsaksodling, i högre grad har kycklinguppfödning och odlar fler olika sorters grönsaker än andra hushåll. Intervjuerna visade också att kvinnorna i byarna nyttjade informella sammanslutningar för sparande från barnbidragen för att till exempel investera i regnvattentankar, vilket sparar mycket arbete med vattenhämtning. Analysen kunde dock inte finna några samband mellan barnbidrag och att ha ett mer stabilt jobb eller att driva framgångsrika mikroföretag, vilket visar på bidragens begränsningar. Kvinnorna vittnade också om att bidragen betytt mycket för deras känsla av självständighet och värdighet, i motsats till argumenten om att bidragen skapar minskad värdighet och självständighet. Att kunna ge sina barn mat varje dag och skicka dem till skolan, eller att kunna hjälpa en granne i nöd bidrog till känslan av värdighet, och att slippa vara beroende av andras välvilja bidrog till självständighet. Kvinnorna framhöll att de i och med pengarna kunde delta i bygemenskapen på ett bättre sätt. Pengarna har också haft positiv inverkan på jämställdhet inom hushållen då kvinnorna fått egen inkomst och inte därmed inte varit lika beroende av männens eller andra släktingars inkomster, samtidigt som bristen på jobb nu allt mer innebar att det var männen som blivit beroende av kvinnornas och de äldres bidrag. I tider av stor arbetslöshet i dessa byar börjar situationer som vanligtvis varit förknippade med att *förlora* en stadig inkomst (såsom sjukdom, ålderdom, funktionshinder, behov av att ta hand om små barn) framstå för många som det enda sättet att *få* en inkomst överhuvudtaget.

Garantipensionen och barnbidraget är mycket viktiga inkomstkällor på den sydafrikanska landsbygden i tider av stor arbetslöshet. Barnbidragen har, tillsammans med andra bidrag som utbetalas månatligen i Sydafrika, också mer vittgående effekter. Intervjuer och observationer visar att människor i byarna alltmer börjar känna att de är medborgare med rättigheter och har legitima skäl att förvänta sig något från staten trots att de inte har arbete. Även om uppfattningar som att bidragen bara är en gåva från staten förekommer, visade intervjuerna främst på att bidragen alltmer ses som rättigheter.

Även om små bidrag i Sydafrika inte ändrar på de större sociala strukturerna som bidrar till fattigdom så är slutsatsen att statliga sociala trygghetssystem såsom barnbidrag och garantipensioner gör stor skillnad i fattiga människors liv. Dessa kontantstöd kan skapa mer långsiktiga effekter på människors försörjning och bidrar även till ökad värdighet, självständighet och jämlikhet för mottagarna. De sociala trygghetssystemen kan utöver detta ha en positiv effekt på mottagarnas känsla av att vara sedda av staten och vara medborgare med rättigheter.

Appendix 1. Household Survey

# **SURVEY 2016 Cutwini**

**Household Number: \_\_\_\_\_**

## SOCIAL GRANTS AND LIVELIHOODS RESEARCH PROJECT

### Signed Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in an interview for research being done by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences by the researcher Stefan Granlund on the general living situation in my household and in particular social grants. I understand that:

- I am free to decide to take part in this research and nothing bad would happen if I do not want to take part.
- I can stop any time I want to and I am allowed to decide not to share anything I don't want to share
- I will not be paid or get any special services or information for taking part in the research.
- The researchers will not use my real name when they write about this research.
- I understand that the researcher does not work for the Government of South Africa.

Ndiyavuma ukuba yinxalenye yale ngxoxo kule ntloholuvo eyenziwa yi Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences ikokelwe ngu Stefan Granlund. Imalunga ntlalo yasemakhaya ngokukodwa imali yezibonelelo. Ndiyaqonda ukuba ke:

- Ndikululekile ukuthatha inxaxheba koluhlolo luvu kwaye akukhonto imbi inokwenzeka
- Ndinokuyeka nanini na xandifuna kwaye ndivumelekile ukwabelana nangantoni na endifuna ukwabelana ngayo
- Andizuhlawulwa ngoku thatha inxaxheba koluhlulolovu
- Akuzukusetyenziswa magama okwenyani
- Ndiyaqonda ukuba abavavanyi abasebenzeli urhulumente wase Mzantsi Africa

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Researcher: Stefan Granlund

The researcher is accountable to his supervisor: Flora Hajdu

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Any complaints regarding the researcher should be sent to:

Text message: +46736735576 Email: [flora.hajdu@slu.se](mailto:flora.hajdu@slu.se)



## Household Questionnaire – Cutwini 2016

**A** Household number: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of structures: \_\_\_\_\_

Roof materials: \_\_\_\_\_ Initials of interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Same hh 2002? \_\_\_\_\_ Time of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

↑

**Ab** Wawufikenini ukuzakwakha apha kweli khaya? Kuwuphi unyaka?  
When was homestead first created at this site? **Approx. what year?** \_\_\_\_\_

Wawukade uhlala aphi ngaphambili?

**Ac** Where did the household head live before?

Kwelinye Ikhaya kwakule lali <i>in a homestead in this village</i>	Nezihlobo <i>with relatives</i>	Ezinye indlela: <i>other comments:</i>
Kwelinye Ikhaya kwenye ilali <i>in a homestead in a different village</i>	Kulomzi wakho <i>own homestead</i>	

Kwakutheni ekhethe ukushiya loo ndawo?

**Ad** Why did the household head move to this site?

Kuba ungafuni kuxhomekeka wakuba utshatile <i>wanted to be independent after marriage</i>	Urhulumente wasinyanzelisa ukuba masisuke <i>the government forced / told us to move</i>	Wathanda ukuhlala kule lali kuba izihlobo zam zazakhe apha <i>wanted to live in this village because my relatives live here</i>
Kuba ungafuni kuxhomekeka kodwa ungatshatanga <i>wanted to be independent, but was not married</i>	Wathanda ukuhlala kule lali kuba ikufutshane nomsebenzi <i>wanted to live in this village because it is close to work</i>	Ezinye: <i>other:</i>
Wabuyela kwilali yakho yokuzalwa emva kokuba utata wekhaya elikhalele <i>moved back to home village after leaving husband</i>	Wathanda ukuhlala kule lali kuba ikufutshane nolwandle <i>wanted to live in this village because it is close to the sea</i>	

Iminyalelo: Gcwalisa imigca ebekiweyo. Qala ngentloko yomzi. \_\_\_\_\_ →

**B** Instructions: Fill the rows. Start with the head of the household

**Chart 1:** Abbreviations for relationship to the head of the household *Uzalana njani nomnikaziwekhaya*

<b>HHH</b> = Head of the house hold (umntu oyintloko yendlu)	<b>W</b> = Wife (nkosikazi)	<b>S</b> = Son (nyana)	<b>D</b> = Daughter (intombi)
<b>W of S</b> = Wife of son (umolokazana)	<b>GC</b> = Grandchild (abazukulwana)	<b>W of GC</b> = Wife of grandchild (umolokazana womzulu)	<b>C of GC</b> = Child of grand- child (isizukulwana)
<b>B</b> = Brother (buti)	<b>Sis</b> = Sister (sisi)	<b>Ne</b> = Nephew/niece (umtshana)	<b>Sis of W</b> = Sister of wife, sister -in-law (sbari)
<b>F</b> = Father (utata)	<b>M</b> = Mother (umama)	<b>CO</b> = Cousin (umzala or kanina)	<b>Sis of M</b> = Mothers sister (Umakazi)
<b>B of F</b> = Father's brother (utatomdala/utatomncinci)	<b>B of M</b> = Mothers brother (umalume)	<b>Sis of F</b> = Fathers sister (udadobawo)	<b>NR</b> = Not related (akasosihlobo)

**Chart 2:** Abbreviations instead of number of spouse or number of mother/father when these are...

<b>P</b> = Passed away (uswelekile)	<b>D</b> = Divorced (wohlukene)	<b>N</b> = Not in homestead (abakho khayeni ngalomzulu)
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Abantu balomzi: Gowalisa imigca ebekiweyo. Qala ngentloko yomzi.

**B** People in the homestead: Fill the rows. Start with the head of the household

→ see chart 2 ←

Igama Name (mark an X by the person(s) you talked to.!) <b>Chart 1: Relationship to the HHH</b>	2002 HH ID if applicable	Indoda Umfazi male/female	Unyaka wokuzaIwa Year of birth	Ixesha Lokufumaneka reside at homestead	Utshatile Ewe/Hayi married yes/no	Utshate nabani no. of spouse	Inani la-bantwana How many children?	Inani itata no. of father	Inani imama no. of mother	Gowalisa/Bafundaphi (ibanga?) Occupation/schooling (which grade?)
1 _____ HHH		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
2 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
3 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
4 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
5 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
6 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
7 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
8 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
9 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
10 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					
11 _____		I/U		Usuku/ Ivekil/ Inyaga/ Unyaka	E/H					

Mark here if an additional sheet has been filled for this household in case of more than 11 household members (Appendix 1)

Ingeniso mali. Kangakanani?

**C** Specify incomes of the household. Mark how often activities take place..

Kangakanani? <i>how often?</i>	Usuku every day	3 d	1 w	2 w	1 m	3 m	6 m	Unyaka every year	Ezinye indlela / inkcukacha other / comments
Imise benzi cacisa <i>jobs, specify</i>									
Spaza <i>small shop</i>									
Nika izinto ezincinane ezingenisayo <i>small things done to supplement incomes, specify</i>									
Ukhona umntu okutumelela imali? <i>Anyone outside of the household sending money?</i>									Below or Above 500 R?
									Bringing food and clothes

Inkcukacha *comments*: \_\_\_\_\_

Isibonelelo? Zingaphi? Uyifumana njani okanye ngoluphi uhlobo imali yesibonelelo?

**D** Are you receiving any grants? How many? Where do you usually withdraw the money?

	Zingaphi? <i>How many?</i>	Inaba uyirhola phi imali? <i>Where do you withdraw the money? (tick or write number)</i>
inkam-nkam yobudala <i>State old age pension, "pension"</i>		1 kwindawo yokurholela elalini (cash pay point in village) 2 ebhankini/eposini (bank/post office) 3 utwebetsa phakathi evenkileni (ATM in a store) 4 usebenzisa ikhasi lakwa SASAA (from SASAA card)
Inkamkam yabantwana <i>child grant</i>		
Ikamkam yokukhubazeka <i>Disability grant</i>		
abafumana /inkam-nkam bangaphi <i>Care dependency grant</i>		
inkam-nkam yomntwana ongenguye owakho ( <i>Foster care grant</i> )		
isibonelelo esisuka bucala/kwinkampani <i>Private/company pension</i>		Monthly payment or one-off payment?

If not receiving grant though they should be receiving – ask why not? Kutheni?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ziziphi izinto enizisebenzisa ekuphekeni / nase kukhanyiseni?

**E** *What source of energy do you use for cooking and lighting?*

	Ekuphekeni <i>Cooking</i>		Ekukhanyiseni <i>Lighting</i>	
	Rhoqo <i>often</i>	Ngamaxesha athile <i>Seldom</i>	Rhoqo <i>Often</i>	Ngamaxesha athile <i>Seldom</i>
<i>Electricity</i>				
<i>Solar cells</i>				
Ijanalethi <i>Generator</i>				
Rhasi <i>Gas</i>				
Ipalafini <i>Paraffin</i>				
Inkuni <i>Wood</i>				
Ikhandlela <i>Candles</i>				

Ingaba ezi zinto zilandelayo zikhona nakulomzi?

**F** *Do you have the following things in your homestead?*

	Unayo i: <i>own:</i>	Ungaba uyayisebenzisa eyomnye i: <i>do you often use someone elses:</i>		Unayo i: <i>own:</i>	Uyayisebenzisa eyomnye i: <i>often use someone elses:</i>
Umabonakude <i>T.V.</i>			Imoto <i>Car</i>		
Idish <i>Satellite dish</i>			Istovi <i>Stove</i>		
Unomyayi <i>Cellphone</i>			iDVD <i>DVD</i>		
Impahla yegumbi lo kuhlala <i>Lounge furniture</i>			Hifi /music system <i>Igumbagumba</i>		
water tank <i>Itanki lamanzi</i>			Plough <i>ikhuba lokulima</i>		
Ifriji Isikhencezisi <i>Fridge</i>			Tractor <i>Iteletele, ukandakanda</i>		

Ngaba unayo imfuyo yasekhaya?

**G** *Do you have domestic animals?*

	Zingapjhi? <i>How many?</i>		Zingapjhi? <i>How many?</i>
Inkomo <i>Cow</i>		Ihagu <i>Pig</i>	
Ihashe <i>Horse</i>		Inkuku <i>Chicken</i>	
Undlebende <i>Donkey</i>		Ikewu <i>duck</i>	
Igusha <i>Sheep</i>		Irhanisi <i>Geese</i>	
Ibokhwe <i>Goat</i>		ezi zezinye <i>other</i>	

**H** Ngaba unayo igadi?  
*Do you have a garden?*

Ewe  
yes

Hayi  
no

Yes, but someone else  
is lending it right now

No, but I am borrowing  
one right now

**Hb** Ngaba unayo intsimi?  
*Do you have a field?*

Ewe  
yes

Hayi  
no

Yes, but renting it to the  
project right now

**Hc** Ukuba awunayo kutheni? Cacisa:  
*If no, why not? Specify*

**Hd** Ngaba uyayilima?  
*Do you grow...?*

	Igadi <i>garden</i>	Intsimi <i>field</i>
Umbona <i>Maize</i>		
Ibhatata <i>sweet potatoes</i>		
Amazambani <i>Potatoes</i>		
Amadumbe <i>Dumbe/ taro</i>		
Ithanga <i>Pumpkins</i>		
Imbotyi <i>Beans</i>		
Ikhapechu <i>Cabbage</i>		
Itomato <i>Tomatoes</i>		
Spinach		
Upelepele <i>Peppers</i>		
Ibeetroot <i>Beetroot</i>		

**He** Ngaba unayo na imithi yeziqhamo?  
*Do you have fruit trees?*

	Ewe yes
Bananas	
Iphesika <i>Peaches</i>	
Guavas	
Chain guavas	
Mangoes	
Ipopo <i>papayas</i>	
Oranges	
Amanatshi <i>narjees</i>	
Ilamla <i>lemons</i>	
Sweet lemons	
Ponyo ponyo <i>avocados</i>	
Umoba <i>sugarcane</i>	
Koqo-koqo	

Ngaba uye uvune amasaka amangaphi xa uvuna egadini yakho?

**Hf** *How many bags of maize do you manage to get from your own garden?* \_\_\_\_\_

Uyautya umbona owomileyo?

Ewe  
yes

Hayi  
no

**Hg** *Do you eat your own dry maize?*

Ukuba ewe, uwuty inyanga ezingaphi enyakeni?

**Hh** *If yes, for how many months?* \_\_\_\_\_

< 1/4   1/4-1/2   1/2-3/4   > 3/4

Zingaphi inyanga inyakeni otyangazo umbona uwako?

**Hi** *How many months of the year do you eat vegetables from your own garden?* \_\_\_\_\_

Phawula *comments / problems:* \_\_\_\_\_

< 1/4   1/4-1/2   1/2-3/4   > 3/4

Ngaba ...

Kangakanani?

**I** Do you...

**Ib** How often?

Imibuzo → Questions	<b>Ib</b>									
	Ewe yes	Usuku daily	3 d	1 w	2 w	1 m	3 m	6 m	Unyaka yearly	
Ukuloba elwandle <i>catch fish in the sea</i>										
Ukubamba izikhuphathi <i>collect crayfish</i>										
Ukuxoza imbaza ukwathi <i>collect mussels/oysters</i>										
Ukuthenza inkuni zokubasa <i>collect wood for fire</i>										
Ukurhela ingca <i>collect grasses</i>										

Inkcukacha / engenye ingxelo *Comments / additional information:*

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Ingaba ukhona umntu ohlupheka ngokwezi zigulo ziphawulwe ngezantsi. Kambe azibone ebambekile engenokwazi nokwenza kwanto:

**M** *Is someone in this household suffering from any of the following to the extent of sometimes not being able to participate in important activities:*

	Ubani Person no. (Part B)	Iyeza Receiving medicines	Abosulelekileyo Affected activities
Iswekile <i>Diabetes / "blood sugar"</i>			
ihayi-hayi <i>High blood pressure / "high blood"</i>			
Istrokhi/ ukufa icala / isifo sentliziyo <i>Stroke / heart ailment</i>			
Umdlaza <i>Cancer</i>			
Isifuba <i>Asthma</i>			
ityhubha-tyholosi/ ithibhi <i>TB</i>			
Isito samathambo <i>Arthritis (bone diseases)</i>			

Inkcukacha/ engenye ingxelo *Comments / additional information:*

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Kwezi veki zine zidlulileyo uqikelela kangakanani...

**N** In the **past four weeks**, how often has someone in this household...

	Zonke intsuku Every day	Lonke ixhesa Often	Ngamanye amaxhesa Some- times	Kanye okanye kabini Once or twice	Azange Never
... nake ndixhalabiswa yinto yokuba umzi lo ungafumani ukutya ngokwaneleyo?  <i>...worried that your household will not have enough food?</i>					
...nake kunyenzeka ungakwazi ukutya ukutya ukufunayo kuba ungakwazi ukukufumana?  <i>...not been able to eat the kinds of foods they would like to eat?</i>					
...nake nakutya ukutya okuncinci, ibe yona intliziyo ifuna ngaphezu koko?  <i>...had to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?</i>					
...wake watya ukutya okuncinci ngemini, kube kunqabe kwakona ukutya?  <i>...had to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?</i>					
...wake walala ulambile?  <i>...had to go to sleep at night hungry?</i>					
..wake wahlala imini yonke ungaryanga kwanto?  <i>had to go a whole day without eating anything?</i>					
..wake wayifumana into yokuba ikati ilale eziko, ubone kungekho kwanto yokutya apha endlini?  <i>..experienced that there is no food at all in your household?</i>					

Inkcukacha/ engenye ingxelo *Comments / additional information:*

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**R** Ingaba ngubani umntu wokuqala onokubhenela kuye xa uhlangana nengxaki **yemali**?  
*Who is the first person that you turn to if you need economic assistance? (Circle **Imali**)*

**Rb** Ingaba ngubani umntu wokuqala obalekela kuye xa unengxaki **yokutya**?  
*Who is the first person that you turn to if you face a shortage of food (Circle **ukutya**)*

**Rc/d** Ingaba uyaqiniseka na ukuba lomntu angakunceda kulengxaki ukuyo?  
*Are you confident that this person will have the resources to help you? (Circle one answer for **imali** and one answer for **ukutya**)*

**R and Rb**

Isihlobo <i>a relative</i>	Umakhelwana <i>a neighbour (who is not a relative)</i>	Umhlobo <i>a friend (who is not a neighbour or relative)</i>	Ezinye indawo ongancedakala kuzo, e.g. ityala other alternative e.g. <i>spaza credit</i>	Akakho <i>I don't turn to anyone</i>
Imali	Imali	Imali	Imali	Imali
Ukutya	Ukutya	Ukutya	Ukutya	Ukutya

**Rc/d**

Ndiqinisekile <i>yes, very confident</i>	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya
Ewe, ukuba unayo imali angandinceda <i>yes, if they have the ability they will help</i>	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya
Andiqinisekanga kakhulu <i>maybe/maybe not</i>	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya
Andiqondi <i>not confident</i>	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya
Hayi konke- konke <i>no, they will probably not be able to help</i>	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya	Imali Ukutya

Inkukachal/ engenye ingxelo *Comments / additional information:*

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Apekhaya ubona ngathi izinto zingcono kunakuqala okanye ziya zibanzima kule minyaka ilishumi elinesihlalu idlulileyo?

**W** *Has life changed in general for better or worse over the last 15 years?*

	Kuyanc- omeka <i>better</i>	Kuyafana <i>Same</i>	Kunzima <i>worse</i>	Kutheni? <i>Why?</i>
<b>W</b>				

**Wb** *Xa uthelekisa kula minyaka ilishumi elinesihlanu, ubona imeko injani apekhaya: Compared to the situation 15 years ago how has your situation changed in relation to:*

<b>Wb</b>	Kuyanc- omeka <i>better</i>	Kuyafana <i>Same</i>	Kunzima <i>worse</i>	Kutheni? <i>Why?</i>
Imfuyo <i>Animals</i>				
Intsimi/igadi <i>Fields/gardens</i>				
Into oyifumanayo futhi uyibhatalele <i>Assets</i>				
Lukhona utshintsho <i>Jobs</i>				
Ingaba ikhona enye into ekungenisela imali <i>Other livelihood opportunities</i>				
Isibonelelo <i>Grants</i>				
Imali engenayo okanye ize nje ngesipho <i>Remittances</i>				
Ezingezinye <i>Other</i>				

Inkcukacha/ engenye ingxelo *Comments / additional information:*

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## Appendix 2 Interview guide

### **Individual level:**

How many children do you have? Do they all receive CSGs?

Do you collect the grant? And where?

What do you use the grant money for? What difference have the grants made to you? What does the CSG help you to do? (Probe: grow more, less, supporting family and relatives, look for jobs, participate in social events—wedding, funeral, send gifts etc, *stokvel* savings, plan ahead, worry and stress)

Who makes the decisions over how grant money is spent?

Does the grant enable you to do things you couldn't do before? Why, why not? If, so what and how?

How does receiving the CSG make you think about yourself? (Probe good, bad, proud, ashamed) What was it like before?

If you think of someone who gets the grant, what words do you use to describe them? Would you use those words to describe yourself?

### **Household level:**

How important is the grant income to your household? (Probe: relative to potential other incomes)

What are the things that people in this household do in order to make ends meet each month?

Is there anyone outside this household that sends money here? Who outside this household helps it to survive? And who does this household help survive?

Are there any family, relative or others that ask you for some of the CSG money?

Do you send them money and why? Have you ever felt obliged to help somebody using your CSG-money even if you didn't want to?

Have you ever had any conflicts with people over the CSG-money? (Probe family, potential partner, relatives, others in the village etc) If so, what was it about? How did that make you feel?

What does the grant enable you to do in the household? What is the difference to this household now that you have the grant?

### **Community level:**

What do other people think about the fact that you receive a CSG? (Probe: friends, partner, children, community) What do other people in the village think about the grants? (Probe, positive or negative? young/old, employed/unemployed, men/women etc) What do people say about Child Support Grants in this village? And in town?

What is like in Cutwini on payday? Do you collect you money here in the village then? Describe that day and what it means to you. What do you do on that day? What do other people do? Has the events around payday changed in any way during the last years or is it the same? Do you look forward to that day? Why, why not?

Do people who get the grant see themselves as poor or not? If they do, why do they think they are poor? What are the reasons? Is that the same for you?

If there is someone who is struggling in the village, who should help out? Who would you turn in times of struggle? (Probe: neighbours, friends, relatives, headman, ward committee)

What does the grant enable you to do here in the community? Are you part of any *stokvel*, *umgalelo* (savings association)? Other organisations? If so, what is that like? How does that make you feel? What does it do for your household?

### **State-citizen level:**

Why do you think the government gives the grants? (Probe: Why is the government responsible for that?)

What do you think about the SASSA-card? Have you had any problems with money gone missing from the card?

Tell me the story of when you applied for the CSG. Probe: Was it difficult or easy? How did that process make you feel? How were you treated at the SASSA office? What has been you experience of collecting the grant? How long does it take to receive the money? Has there been any differences since last we spoke?

What is it like to collect the grants in town? How it is like there on payday?

What would happen if the grants stopped coming? (Probe: For you, your household, for the community) What would you do if so? (Probe: complain to SASSA or not etc)

Are you worried the grant will disappear? Or taken away from you? Do you see the grant as right? Or a gift from the government? (Probe: why? Why not? What does it mean to feel like you have a right to something?)

What is your expectation of the government? (Probe: income security, jobs, roads, water, health care, education etc) What would you think about a grant for everyone in the village (even young men)?

Do you remember what it was like without the grant? What was it like back then? Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to bring up regarding the grants?

Paper I–IV







# Changing Livelihoods in Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002-2016)

## Diminishing employment and expanding social protection

Flora Hajdu<sup>1</sup>, David Neves<sup>2</sup>, Stefan Granlund<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

<sup>2</sup> University of the Western Cape

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### Abstract

Despite longstanding patterns of agrarian change in South and Southern Africa, rural locales remain home to millions of people and characterised by widespread poverty and vulnerability. This is evident in South Africa's former 'homelands', the site where this study examined changes in rural livelihoods over a 14 year period. Detailed survey data (collected in 2002 and 2016) from two villages in the Pondoland region of the Eastern Cape Province, and augmented by in-depth fieldwork, is analysed to explore the drivers of contemporary livelihood change. Key livelihood activities are examined, namely: paid employment, social grant receipt, horticulture and livestock production, marine resource and firewood harvesting. So too are changes within, and between, these diverse livelihood activities over time. Both monetised, income-earning activities and 'un-remunerated' or un-monetised activities (e.g. subsistence agriculture, marine resource harvesting) are measured, aggregated and compared, in order to consider the drivers, consequences and prospective future trajectories of livelihood change.

Key findings for impoverished households in the villages are that waged work has decreased significantly, while expanding social welfare provision has prevented plunges into deeper poverty. Agriculture and marine resource harvesting remains dynamic, albeit unevenly engaged with by villagers. Amidst these larger patterns, local-level variations are evident, with discrepant employment and agricultural production patterns across villages. The role of the state is ambiguous, being both a restrictor and enabler of local livelihoods. As jobs and other livelihood opportunities diminish, the villagers express frustration with the state, but remain simultaneously heavily reliant on state fiscal transfers, through grants and public employment schemes. The findings speak not only to the dynamics of rural livelihoods in South Africa's former homelands; they also point to changes in rural dweller's livelihoods, within contexts of agrarian change, rural dispossession, inequality and receding prospects for employment, increasingly evident across the Global South.

*Keywords:* Livelihoods, rural, social protection, Pondoland, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

### Introduction

Livelihoods in the rural parts of South Africa's former homelands have long been a topic of interest. Widespread poverty reflects the historical legacy of colonialism and apartheid, and the failure of the post-Apartheid state to reverse it. Both a long tradition of inquiry, and an array of development interventions (detailed later), have failed to fully address poverty and vulnerability. This failure of development in the former homelands partially stems from inadequate understandings of local contexts and livelihoods<sup>1</sup>.

Livelihoods research is well suited to detailed understanding of this context; the manner in which rural dwellers diversify and combine activities, how they draw on assets and capabilities, and how households' survival strategies and social relations shape these choices all warrant attention<sup>2</sup>. Livelihood activities are multiple and interdependent and ought therefore not be viewed in isolation, but rather in terms of 'portfolios', where multiple activities relate to and complement each other, and where management of livelihood risks is an

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<sup>1</sup> K. Jacobson, *From Betterment to Bt maize: Agricultural Development and the Introduction of Genetically Modified Maize to South African Smallholders*, (Diss. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2013); T. Kepe, and D. Tessaro, 'Trading-off: Rural Food Security and Land Rights in South Africa'. *Land Use Policy*, 36, (2014) pp. 267–274.

<sup>2</sup> I. Scoones, *Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development* (Rugby, Action Publishing, 2015); L. de Haan, *Livelihoods in Development*. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 38, (2017), pp. 22–38.

important aspect<sup>3</sup>. Drivers of livelihood change straddle ‘external’ factors (such as food prices or labour market change), and internal factors (such as evolving aspirations and traditions), and are required to adequately understand livelihoods and the impacts their future prospects and development interventions.

A comprehensive understanding of livelihood dynamics benefits from combining of both deep (‘intensive’), and broad (‘extensive’) inquiry. An intensive approach serves to illuminate the specificity of activities and contexts, and is complemented by extensive detailed survey data, to allow for the diversity of activities, their relative prevalence and, ideally, change over time to be considered. Others have identified the need for this combined approach<sup>4</sup>. This article accordingly combines extended ethnographic study in the two villages (intermittently between 2001 and 2018) with two waves (2002 and 2016) of an in-depth survey of all households (273 in 2016), within the villages. The study thus contributes novel insights into processes of livelihood change in the former Transkei, a homeland area in what is now the Eastern Cape, and considers the wider and future implications of these changes.

A distinctive quality of the analysis is the focus on livelihood ‘portfolios’ and their change over time. For this exercise, significant household livelihood activities are aggregated (at village level) to show the relative importance of each, and compare the contributions of monetised (income-generating) and non-monetised (or un-remunerated) activities. Although a substitution or ‘shadow value’ is attributed to non-monetised livelihood activities in this exercise, these are typically not marked by straightforward exchanges of cash. This aggregation at village level also illuminates the discrepancy between the activities that are most significant for villagers (viz. labour market derived incomes and welfare grant receipt), and those that typically garner the most research and policy attention—namely agriculture, ecosystem services and natural resource use. Hajdu argues the seemingly disproportionate concern with the latter—natural resource use—seems primarily motivated by concerns over ecological degradation, rather than the dearth of local livelihood opportunities<sup>5</sup>. A livelihoods approach, through examining all activities together, and situating them in the broader structural and political economy context promises the insights needed to better understand, and ultimately advance rural development.

This paper begins by describing the broader social, economic and environmental context of the former homelands of the Eastern Cape, reviewing the literature on historical transformations and recent changes. After describing the survey and interview based research methods, and the focal research villages, the changing portfolios of livelihood activities between 2002 and 2016 are discussed. The methodology by which monetised and non-monetary activities are comparable, to enable an analysis of the changing value of activities, both over time and relative to each other, is presented. Following this, changes in each significant livelihood activity (viz. employment, collecting social grant and remittance incomes, horticultural and livestock production, marine resource and firewood harvesting) are discussed separately. The concluding section deliberates on the main findings, and considers future trajectories for rural livelihoods and their wider implications.

### Literature review: Changing livelihoods in rural Eastern Cape

While there are commonalities between the former homelands of South Africa and other former settler colonial societies of Southern and Eastern Africa, the distinct historical, social and ecological context of the homelands warrants a brief introduction. The late nineteenth century, mining-led industrialisation of South Africa led to the expansion of commodity relations, and monetisation drew rural African men into systems of migratory labour. Racialised dispossession intensified from the early twentieth century onwards, and with it incrementally growing crises in agriculture within the ethnic enclave of the ‘Native reserves’ (later ‘homelands’)<sup>6</sup>. These areas have long been incorporated into the wider political economy of South Africa, and characterised by ‘de-agrarianisation’—the social, occupational and economic shift away from agriculture. These dynamics continued unabated in the second half of the twentieth century with the rise of apartheid and creation of nominally independent ethnic ‘homelands’<sup>7</sup>. From the 1970’s this legacy of racialised, structural underdevelopment became exacerbated by declines in

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<sup>3</sup> E. Francis, Rural Livelihoods, Institutions and Vulnerability in the North West Province, South Africa, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 3, (2002), pp. 531–550.

<sup>4</sup> C. Masunungure and S. Shackleton, Exploring Long-term Livelihood and Landscape Change in Two Semi-arid Sites in Southern Africa: Drivers and Consequences for Social-Ecological Vulnerability, *Land*, 7, 2 (2017), p. 50; S. Shackleton and M. Luckert, Changing Livelihoods and Landscape in the Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa: Past Influences and Future Trajectories, *Land*, 4, 4 (2015), pp. 1060–1089.

<sup>5</sup> F. Hajdu, *Local Worlds: Rural Livelihoods in Eastern Cape, South Africa*. Diss. Linköping University, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> H. Wolpe, Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid, *Economy and Society* 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425–456; C. Bundy, (1988). *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> L. Bank and G. Minkley, Going Nowhere Slowly? Land, Livelihoods and Rural Development in the Eastern Cape, *Social Dynamics*, 31, 1 (2005), pp.1–38.

the demand for cheap, low-skilled African labour historically needed by the industrial economy.<sup>8</sup>

Enduring into the post-apartheid period, these dynamics have created an impoverished and unemployed rural population, neither engaged in significant agricultural production, nor able to make the transition to scant industrial employment.<sup>9</sup> The mid-1990s advent of democracy left existing property relations, along with poverty, largely unchanged. The South African state has partially responded to poverty through the expansion of social protection, including (albeit often uneven), public housing, education and health provisioning and the expansion of cash pensions and welfare grants paid to approximately a third of the population, mainly the impoverished elderly, caregivers of children and disabled.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, rural South Africa remains bifurcated into the formerly 'white' countryside where commercial agriculture takes place and the communal areas of the former homelands marked by waning smallholder agriculture.

Previous studies of the communal areas of the rural Eastern Cape, relevant to understanding livelihoods, include seminal works examining the colonial period<sup>11</sup>, and changes following the colonial encounter.<sup>12</sup> Apartheid policies and interventions, including compulsory mid-century 'betterment' villagisation<sup>13</sup> often

adversely affected local livelihoods. Within the post-apartheid period the dynamism and 'hybridity' of rural livelihoods has been noted.<sup>14</sup> Many contemporary studies have focused on specific livelihood activities, particularly on cultivation<sup>15</sup>, including of cash crops such as marijuana<sup>16</sup>, but also on livestock<sup>17</sup>, forest resources<sup>18</sup> and grasses.<sup>19</sup> Apart from national labour force and census data, dedicated research into activities such as informal employment and self-employment in the region is uncommon. However, various failed interventions and schemes for employment creation and income generation have been examined (discussed below).

In terms of agrarian and rural transitions, the literature echoes the long-term shift away from a reliance on agriculture and land-based livelihoods<sup>20</sup> already noted. Yet conceptualisations of rural development in the former homelands are in many cases dominated by the notion of its primacy.<sup>21</sup> Development planning is often sector-based<sup>22</sup> and overlooks the, often diverse, ranges of household livelihood activities. This has frequently led to failure of development interventions. Projects and programmes are often hamstrung by their paucity of local consultation and understanding of rural lives and livelihoods, simultaneously with a tendency to narrowly focus on local 'mindsets' for identifying both problems and solutions,

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<sup>8</sup> A. Black and H. Gerwel, Shifting the Growth Path to Achieve Employment Intensive Growth in South Africa, *Development Southern Africa*, 31, 2 (2014), pp. 241–256.

<sup>9</sup> D. Neves and A. du Toit, Rural Livelihoods in South Africa: Complexity, Vulnerability and Differentiation, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13, 1 (2013), pp. 93–111.

<sup>10</sup> J. Seekings and N. Nattrass, *Policy, Politics and Poverty in South Africa* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan and UNRISD, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> J. M. Feely, *The Early Farmers of Transkei, Southern Africa: Before A.D. 1870*. Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology (Oxford, B. A. R., 1987); P. McAllister, Rural Production, Land Use and Development Planning in Transkei: A Critique of the Transkei Agricultural Development study, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 11 (1992), pp. 200–222.

<sup>12</sup> M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*. (London, Oxford University Press, 1936); W. Beinart, Transkeian Smallholders and Agrarian Reform, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 11, (1992), pp. 178–200; C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), (Cape Town, David Philip, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape 1890–1930*. (London, Jamesrey, 1987); C. de Wet, *Moving Together, Drifting Apart: Betterment Planning and Villagisation in a South African Homeland*, (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1995); D.A. Fay, *The Trust Is Over! We Want to Plough!: Land, Livelihoods and Reverse Resettlement in South Africa's Transkei*, (Diss. Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Hajdu, *Local Worlds*; Neves and du Toit, *Rural livelihoods in South Africa*; A. du Toit and D. Neves, *The Government of Poverty and the Arts of Survival: Mobile and Recombinant Strategies at the Margins of the South African Economy*, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41, 5 (2014), pp. 833–853.

<sup>15</sup> M. de la Hey and W. Beinart, 2016. Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields? A Case Study. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43 (2016), pp. 753–770; K. Jacobson, *From Betterment to Bt maize*; D. Blair, C. Shackleton, P. Mograbi, Cropland abandonment in South African Smallholder Communal Lands: Land cover change (1950–2010) and Farmer Perceptions of Contributing Factors. *Land*, 7, 4 (2018) pp. 121–141; C.M. Shackleton, P.J. Mograbi, S. Drimie, D. Fay, P. Hebinck, M.T. Hoffman, K. Maciejewski, W. Twine, Deactivation of Field Cultivation in Communal Areas of South Africa: Patterns, Drivers and Socio-Economic and Ecological Consequences, *Land Use Policy*, 82 (2019), pp. 686–699; P. Hebinck, N. Mtiati, C. Shackleton, More Than Just Fields: Reframing Deagrarianisation in Landscapes and Livelihoods, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61 (2018), pp. 323–334.

<sup>16</sup> T. Kepe, *Cannabis sativa* and Rural Livelihoods in South Africa: Politics of Cultivation, Trade and Value in Pondoland, *Development Southern Africa*, 20, 5, (2003), pp. 605–615.

<sup>17</sup> A. Ainslie, 2005. Farming Cattle, Cultivating relationships: Cattle Ownership and Cultural Politics in Peddie District, Eastern Cape, *Social Dynamics*, 31 (2005), pp. 129–156.

<sup>18</sup> C. Shackleton and S. Shackleton, The Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products in and as Safety Nets: A Review of Evidence from South Africa, *South African Journal of Science*, 100, 11 (2004), pp. 658–664.

<sup>19</sup> T. Kepe, Use, Control and Value of Craft Material—*Cyperus textilis*: Perspectives from a Mpondo Village, South Africa, *South African Geographical Journal*, 85, 2 (2003), pp.152–157.

<sup>20</sup> Bryceson, *Gender and generational pattern*.

<sup>21</sup> D. Neves, D. (2017). Reconsidering Rural Development: Using Livelihood Analysis to Examine Rural Development in the Former Homelands of South Africa. *PLAAS Research report No. 54*. (Cape Town, PLAAS, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> R. Slater, Differentiation and Diversification: Changing Livelihoods in Qwaqwa, South Africa, 1970–2000, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 3 (2002), pp. 599–614.

ignoring wider structural contexts and determinants.<sup>23</sup> The result is a litany of failed agricultural interventions within the Eastern Cape—including The Massive Food Production Programme (MFPP)<sup>24</sup>; the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, Eastern Cape (AsgiSA EC)<sup>25</sup> and the Siyazondla Homestead Food Production Programme.<sup>26</sup> Attempts at job creation including, tourism development interventions<sup>27</sup>, microfinance for self-employment and community-based work creation initiatives<sup>28</sup> and the parastatal Magwa Tea plantation<sup>29</sup> suffer similar weaknesses.

In her PhD thesis, Hajdu reported on her 2002 survey of livelihoods activities and portfolios in all households in two villages—the data used as a baseline also in this paper<sup>30</sup>. Hajdu analysed the relative importance of various livelihood activities at an aggregate household and village level, through imputing the monetary value of each, including non-monetised activities, and comparing their contributions to total livelihood portfolios. This analysis revealed that agriculture and natural resource use, as well as remittances from migrants, were of relatively minor value compared to local (formal and informal sector) employment and state welfare transfers. Local employment, although far from widely available or well-paid, was in terms of value more significant than all natural resource-based harvesting and use<sup>31</sup> (also see Table 2 and Figure 1). The detailed picture from 2002 was re-examined in the present study in 2016. The comparison of 2002 and 2016, revealing the most interesting changes, is detailed in the results section.

## Data collection

The data draws on a 2002 and 2016 survey of all households in two villages (a total of 273 households in 2016), complemented by in-depth interviews, extensive ethnographic fieldwork and participant

observation. Fieldwork was undertaken primarily by Hajdu (from 2001 to 2014), and Granlund (from 2016 to 2018). The respective researchers forged deep contacts with the villages, each living in local households for several months. In between fieldwork periods, contact was maintained with villagers via phone, email and social media.

The survey drew on in-depth knowledge of livelihood activities gleaned through observations and interviews. Fieldwork was conducted with the aid of socially adept, locally trusted, fluently English-speaking research assistants, some of whom worked in both surveys. The surveys were comparable, with a few minor amendments made in 2016, to ensure new activities were captured. The survey questionnaire included items on household composition, formal and informal employment, remittances, social grants, natural resources use, energy sources, assets, livestock and other agricultural activities, health and perceptions of livelihood and food security. Survey data was validated through the in-depth qualitative interviews with villagers, and the participant observation during the cumulative 18 months spent in the village by the researchers. Activities and concurrent development initiatives in the area were followed and documented.

The survey results presented below were analysed through calculations presented as percentages of total households engaging in activities, with differences between 2002 and 2016 shown (Tables 1 and 3-7). The exception is the complex calculation of relative value of livelihoods (in Table 2 and Figure 2) (to aid comprehensibility the calculation is explained adjacent to the table). Data interpretation was informed by the extended ethnographic fieldwork in the villages, ongoing dialogue with the research assistants, and cross-checked during research dissemination visits to the villages<sup>32</sup>. In this paper we report mainly on the

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<sup>23</sup> K. Jacobson, The Massive Food Production Programme: A Case Study of Agricultural Policy Continuities and Changes. In: P. Hebinck and B. Cousins (Eds.) *In the Shadow of Policy: Everyday Practices in South African Land and Agrarian Reform* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2013); F. Hajdu, K. Jacobson, L. Salomonsson and E. Friman, 'But Tractors Can't Fly': A Transdisciplinary Analysis of Neoliberal Agricultural Development Interventions in South Africa, *International Journal of Transdisciplinary Research*, 6, 1 (2012), pp. 24–51.

<sup>24</sup> Jacobson, *The Massive Food Production Programme*; Z. Mad-yibi, The Massive Food Production Programme: Does It Work? In: Hebinck and Cousins *In the Shadow of Policy*; K. Fischer, F. Hajdu, Does Raising Maize Yields Lead to Poverty Reduction? A Study of the 'Massive Food Production Programme' in South Africa'. *Land Use Policy*, 46 (2015), pp. 304–313.

<sup>25</sup> Hajdu *et al.*, 'But tractors can't fly'.

<sup>26</sup> D. Fay, Cultivators in Action, Siyazondla Inaction? Trends and Potentials in Homestead Cultivation. In: P. Hebinck and B. Cousins (Eds.) *In the Shadow of Policy: Everyday Practices in South African Land and Agrarian Reform*, (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2013) pp. 247–262; H. de Klerk, 2013. Still

Feeding Ourselves: Everyday Practices of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Production Programme. In: P. Hebinck and B. Cousins (Eds.) *In the Shadow of Policy: Everyday Practices in South African Land and Agrarian Reform* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2013) pp. 231–246.

<sup>27</sup> B. Cousins and T. Kepe, Decentralisation When Land and Resource Rights are Deeply Contested: A Case Study of the Mkambati Eco-Tourism Project on the Wild Coast of South Africa. *European Journal of Development Research*, 16, 1, (2004), pp. 41–54; Z.M. Ntshona, and E. Lahiff, *Community-Based Eco-Tourism on the Wild Coast, South Africa: The Case of the Amadiba Trail* (Brighton: University of Sussex, Institute of Development Studies, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

<sup>29</sup> T. Kepe, Magwa Tea Venture in South Africa: Politics, Land and Economics, *Social Dynamics*, 31, 1 (2005), pp. 261–279

<sup>30</sup> Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Findings were also presented and validated at a seminar with Eastern Cape based policy makers and researchers in November 2018 at ECSECC (Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council).

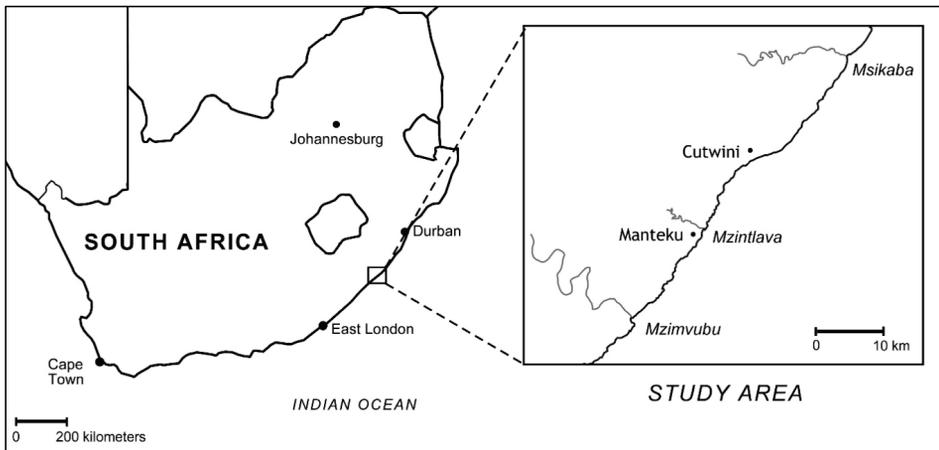
survey, whereas in forthcoming articles we discuss the interview material in more detail.

### The two villages: changing livelihoods (2002-2016)

The two case study villages, Cutwini and Manteku (marked in Figure 1), are located in Pondoland, a distinct area within the former Transkei, in the subtropical coastal strip alongside the Indian Ocean. They are part of the scenic Wild Coast, an area of high tourism potential (and concomitant livelihood making opportunities). Yet the villages are relatively isolated, with poor infrastructure and limited services. Located in a 'deep rural' area the villages are relatively

ethnically homogenous, demographically stable and socially cohesive communities.

Salient differences exist between the villages. Cutwini is more populous than Manteku (see Table 1) with larger grazing and agricultural lands; while Manteku is closer to neighbouring villages, its (unpaved) roads are more passable and traversed by a regular bus service. Manteku has easier access to the sea and estuaries, while from Cutwini the sea is less accessible, 2–3 kilometres beyond steep cliffs. Neither village had electricity prior to 2012. Water is collected from local springs (via communal water tanks in Manteku) and, for some, in household rain water tanks.



**Figure 1.** Map of South Africa, and the location of the two case study villages, Cutwini and Manteku, marked.

An important distinction between the villages is that Cutwini was subject to the forced villagisation into nucleated, linear settlements of 'betterment' in the 1960s and 1970s. Plots are in close proximity and only about 0,3 ha, often leaving only 0,2 ha for a kitchen garden around homesteads. Small plots are a constraint for those who wish to cultivate, in a context where field cultivation has increasingly been abandoned (discussed below). In 2002 many Cutwini based informants expressed reluctance to move away or enlarge their gardens beyond their historical allocation. By 2016 more new households had been established in a similar grid like-pattern on 0,3 ha sites. However, those who desired bigger gardens had in some cases selected plots at points in the grid where gardens could be expanded.

In Manteku, forced relocations occurred on a smaller scale, and were only dimly recalled by some of

the elderly. Manteku's scattered homesteads are located in a hillier, more difficult to cultivate terrain. The soil is more fertile than the sandy soils of Cutwini however and many households had larger gardens in 2002 (up to 0,5 ha). Although the majority of households in both villages had access to these 'kitchen' gardens, their cultivation had dropped by approximately 10% until 2016 (Table 1).

Between 2002 and 2016, number of households in both villages grew, by 19% and 14% in Cutwini and Manteku respectively (Table 1). Total population numbers however increased only slightly in Manteku and decreased in Cutwini. Moderate demographic growth reflects South Africa's 'demographic transition' to lower fertility rates, universally associated with development, and the fact that the number of households still grew is due to 'household unbund-

ling<sup>33</sup> to smaller average household sizes. Cutwini had a discernible tendency towards the earlier establishment of households by young people (possibly enabled by greater land availability), in contrast with the larger, multigenerational households commonly found elsewhere, including Manteku. Informants confirmed these dynamics, that are also reflected in the steeper drop in average household size

(from 6,5 to 5,3 in Cutwini compared to from 6,8 to 6,1 in Manteku).

The table also reveals intra-village movement. Consistent with the demographic cycle of household formation and dissolution, some homestead sites were abandoned, and others newly established. Only 2–4% of the households in 2016 migrated in to the village during the preceding 14 years, a comparatively low rate of mobility.

**Table 1.** Basic data on households, livelihood activities and assets for Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016. Percentages in brackets are out of the total households in the respective village and year.

Household Characteristics	Cutwini		Manteku	
	2002	2016	2002	2016
Population total no. of persons	944	918	588	608
No. of households (empty/abandoned sites excl.)	146	174	87	99
No. of households that have moved into village since 2002 from outside the area		4 (2%)		4 (4%)
No. of households established by persons moving within the village since 2002.		54 (31%)		30 (30%)
No. of homestead sites abandoned since 2002		38 (26%)		30 (30%)
No. of households with local employment (daily commuting possible)	103 (71%)	87 (50%)	40 (46%)	19 (19%)
No. of households having a food garden	138 (95%)	149 (86%)	61 (70%)	62 (63%)
No. of households owning water tank	2 (1%)	35 (20%)	2 (2%)	19 (19%)
No. of households owning TV	26 (11%)	100 (57%)	6 (7%)	42 (42%)
No. of households owning a cell phone	22 (15%)	154 (89%)	11 (13%)	83 (84%)

Ethnographic enquiry suggests changes over the past 14 years in housing, assets, diet and lifestyles, which resonate with changes elsewhere across rural South Africa and the Global South. One of the first priorities when villagers acquire resources is upgrading physical dwellings. Mud floors are replaced by cement, and thatched roofs by corrugated iron. While *rondavels* (circular huts) were very common in 2002, these have to a large extent been replaced with multi-room rectilinear homesteads. This has happened to a significant extent in both villages, but especially in Cutwini. Prioritising the house and homestead is notable also in how many households have acquired relatively expensive rain water tanks (Table 1). In terms of assets, ownership of cellular (mobile) phones has increased most, with 600–650% in Cutwini/Manteku. Television ownership has also increased by several hundred per cent. Villagers also prioritise store-

bought lounge furniture, now owned by 29/26% (Cutwini/Manteku) of households (no data for 2002, but it was uncommon). In the course of 14 years, evenings spent sitting on mats around the fire or on wooden benches in non-electrified kitchens have been increasingly replaced by sitting on sofas watching television.

Marked changes in diets include increased consumption of meat, processed commercial snacks, sweets and carbonated soft drinks (soda)—all of which are comparatively expensive. A calculation exercise in 2016, with an average size/average income household showed 25% of food expenditure was on processed snacks, sweets and soft drinks. Most households in 2016 relied on supermarket purchased mealie meal (or *pap*/maize porridge) as the staple food, but with a clear shift in youth preferences away from home produced *pap*. These changes are intertwined with increased

<sup>33</sup> U. Pillay, Urban Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Context, Evolution and Future Direction. *Urban Forum*, 19 (2008) pp. 109–132.

exposure to the mass media, advertising and urban-based and popular culture, evident among the younger generation<sup>34</sup>. Fundiswa<sup>35</sup>, a woman in her early 40s, explained: 'It's our time now. We are educated, we don't want that stuff, we want the stuff they have and eat in the cities. We don't want to plough the fields (interview, April 2017). Youth disinclination to embrace an agrarian lifestyle or identity is echoed elsewhere in the literature as well,<sup>36</sup> and discussed below. These patterns of consumption require cash and are difficult to satisfy through own-use farming and livestock production.

In reply to a survey question as to whether life had become better or worse since 2002, 52% and 55% (Cutwini and Manteku respectively) answered 'better', 12%/9% 'the same' and a uniform 35% 'worse'. This resonates with survey findings pointing to increasing intra-village social stratification. In interviews, informants report life to have improved in terms of access to electricity, better quality housing, more assets and the regular social grant income (for recipients). Food insecurity also dropped, with the majority of households reporting worrying about not having enough food to eat 'all the time' in 2002, but a majority claiming to only worry 'sometimes' or 'never' in 2016. Conversely, life is worse and vulnerability increased for households without jobs or social grants, as noted by others<sup>37</sup>. Many households do not yet own televisions, refrigerators or lounge furniture (35%-51% of households), and live in poor quality (i.e. non-weatherproof) structures. The fact that 29–31% of households 'sometimes' experience not having any food in the house still points to food security being an issue despite dropping significantly.

However, it is conceptually difficult to draw precise conclusions about improvements exclusively from villager's self-reports, as expressed needs often increase upward over time. What might have been aspirational in 2002 (e.g. owning a television, cellular phone, consuming meat and soft drinks on special occasions) is increasingly viewed as a minimum social necessity—a process unique neither to rural areas nor southern Africa.

Although perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable or comfortable existence have increased, they remain relatively modest. Amidst a century-old pattern of urban migration from historically rural 'labour sending' areas, the researchers also encountered a counter-narrative. Some young people eschewed urban migration and attempting to access all amenities of city life, instead intending to remain in the

village, hoping to access sufficient income for food and clothing and building a homestead with furniture and TV, electricity and a water tank.

Over the past 14 years the villages have been the focus of several development interventions. Cutwini received several successive state and donor run agricultural development programmes. By 2009 most villagers had stopped cultivating their fields, relying on various development projects that typically ran for a year or two before folding. Project failings included sporadic communication with the villagers, and elementary errors such as the provision of tractors unable to cross a river to access fields.<sup>38</sup> By 2016 villagers were nominally 'renting' their fields to a new development project, which did not even engage them in harvesting, and had folded entirely by 2018. The project's reputed failings included omitting to conduct soil analysis and unexpectedly discovering soils to be sandy and salty; inadequate storage that led to rodents decimating the harvest; and logistical delays which saw the uncollected crop begin to rot before being transported. Local informants suggested that the project 'overspent on inputs', and it was claimed locally that the R 11 million project (targeting the larger Lambasi area), sustained a R 5 million loss.

Similarly, Manteku was identified for a Department of Land Affairs and Agriculture microfinance programme (2002–04), which ultimately funded no local activities and fuelled resentment. Subsequently a R 670 000 EU-funded community (horticultural) nursery in Manteku in 2005 soon fell into disuse due to lack of community ownership and little evident planning for project sustainability. Finally, both villages were included within a larger EU-funded community tourism initiative along the 'Wild Coast' that promised many local jobs that never materialised.

These unsuccessful development projects made the inhabitants of both villages sceptical of development interventions, with resentment and a sense of being overlooked by the state more emphatically expressed in Manteku. Here local work opportunities decreased significantly, as public employment schemes largely bypassed the village. The fruitless projects also coincided with the state's increased enforcement of marine protection regulations with guards regularly patrolling the coast, and the demolition of (illegally built) holiday cottages in Manteku. The erstwhile owners of these cottages had been petty patrons and casual employers of Manteku residents, and their eviction caused local protests—armed guards ended up overseeing the demolition. The coast remains moni-

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<sup>34</sup> C. Jeske, 'Are Cars the New Cows? Changing Wealth Goods and Moral Economies in South Africa', *American Anthropologist*, 118, 3 (2016), pp. 483–494.

<sup>35</sup> Pseudonyms are used.

<sup>36</sup> De la Hey and Beinart, 'Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned Arable Production in Fields?'; Blair, *et al.*, 'Cropland abandonment'.

<sup>37</sup> Neves and du Toit, 'Rural Livelihoods in South Africa'; Shackleton and Luckert, 'Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes'.

<sup>38</sup> See Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'.

tored from the air for illegal building, recurrently reminding Manteku residents of the state's role in restricting their livelihoods, while failing to provide alternatives.

### Relative value of livelihood activities: A comparison between 2002 and 2016

While various studies have examined livelihood activities in the former homelands, scholars have less commonly attempted to establish the *relative* values of different livelihood activities. Hajdu argues however that such exercises are important order to grasp why people prioritise specific activities over others<sup>39</sup>. In line with the broad livelihoods approach, in-depth understanding of livelihoods in relation to each other is key for grasping the potential for improvement and interventions. In this section, such a calculation is presented, whereby various livelihood activities are valued and aggregated at village level—through a calculation that tallies up both monetised and non-monetised activities. Aggregating values at village level helps to look beyond the specificity of individual households in order to gain a larger perspective—showing that although there may be households with larger herds of cattle, or well-paying jobs, these cases are exceptions at the village level. The results of the calculations between 2002 and 2016 are compared for each village in Table 2 and Figure 1, as are the changes and the processes underlying them.

The calculations used to assess the relative importance of livelihood activities draw on a common metric for analysis, namely the imputed value of various livelihood activities aggregated at village level. The monetary value attributed to livelihood activities in this analysis should be understood firstly, in broad and approximate order-of-magnitude terms, and secondly, with the specific purpose of facilitating comparison of different livelihood activities. Although other important aspects of environmental resources, such as providing fresher produce and better nutrition than store-bought foods or providing food security also if money is lacking, are important they are not readily ascribed a monetary value. If such values had been added to the calculation they would likely have boosted the value component of natural resource based livelihood activities.

The easiest calculation was aggregating social grants, since the value of each is known and surveyed. In terms of employment<sup>40</sup>, the survey data captured of how many people engaged in what employment, within each household, which together with the average approximate income for each occupation was used to

compute the size of employment income, at village level. Wages were based on labour-market indexed approximations of common occupations (discussed in greater detail in the next section). The 'employment' category includes informal self-employment (e.g. taxi driving, running small shops and other personal or community services) and temporary jobs in public employment schemes.

In the case of urban labour migrants, part of their earnings is used to subsist elsewhere. Hence, a set of criteria were devised for estimating each labour migrant's approximate monthly contribution. Estimates are contingent on the migrant's occupation, relationship to the household (e.g. household head, son etc.) and other incomes present in the household. They also take into account that remittances can be intermittent, for example to cover school fees, Christmas gifts or house repairs.

The question of how to assign value to natural resources is widely debated, with attempts to assign strictly monetary values criticised on different accounts.<sup>41</sup> In rural Eastern Cape, Shackleton *et al.* estimated the use of each resource and indexed it to the local sale prices, but arrived at seemingly very high estimates of the direct-use values, e.g. arguing firewood has a use value of over R3000 per household annually<sup>42</sup>. Whereas in reality local trade in firewood is limited and households unable to collect firewood typically substituted it with paraffin or LPG (gas), costing approximately R500 a year in 2004.<sup>43</sup> Sheil and Wunder similarly warn of the difficulties in ascribing values to natural resources (and point out that they come to radically different results)<sup>44</sup>. Instead, they stress the importance of understanding resource users' motives, and their weighting of costs and benefits when choosing between options. In this paper, substitution values are used, i.e. the value of the commodity villagers indicated they would (or do) substitute a given natural resources with—e.g. firewood was routinely substituted with paraffin in 2002, but was eclipsed by electricity in 2016.

Similarly, the imputed value of agricultural products and marine resource revenues used the sale price of the proportion of crops/livestock/fish etc. actually sold. The value accorded such products that were consumed was the market price of the food (or animal feed) it substituted for. The paper relies on the survey and interviews for this supporting data, e.g. frequency of fishing, average number of fish caught, how often fish are consumed or sold (and if sold, how much is earned; if eaten, the value of a comparable comestible). Figures could differ between the two villages, e.g. in Manteku fish were readily sold to

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<sup>39</sup> Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

<sup>40</sup> We differentiate between local employment (to which it is possible to commute while residing in the village) and labour migration (with daily residency away from the village).

<sup>41</sup> T. Kepe, 'Beyond the Numbers'; Sheil and Wunder, 'The Value of Tropical Forest'.

<sup>42</sup> Shackleton, *et al.* 'The Value of Non-Timber Forest Products'.

<sup>43</sup> Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

<sup>44</sup> Sheil and Wunder, 'The Value of Tropical Forest'.

tourists, earning more income than in isolated Cutwini, where villagers were more inclined to consume the fish themselves. The converse was true of crayfish, as by 2016 a registered buyer with a refrigerated truck was procuring directly from Cutwini's villagers. These complexities were factored into the calculations.

The exception to the above approach is cattle, while the 'meat value' of cattle slaughtered in the village was tallied, the total estimated market value of cattle in the village (divided by 12 months) is indicated in Table 2 (bottom row), instead of simply including a value for cattle sold. The reason being that cattle are assets more comparable to capital goods or encumbered bank savings. Cattle ownership is surrounded by social norms that preclude casual cash sales (as several have noted<sup>45</sup>). No households surveyed engaged in cattle sales with any regularity<sup>46</sup>. Instead, cattle were mainly kept for ceremonial slaughter and bridewealth, and as investments only liquidated (i.e. sold) in response major shocks, or to fund significant household projects (such as housebuilding).

Table 2 thus shows the aggregated village averages for different livelihood activities in 2002 and 2016 (to show changes, 2002 figures are provided with inflation adjusted figures in brackets). The percent increase/decrease in each category was calculated based on the inflation adjusted figures. The table data is presented as pie charts in Figure 2, showing the share of total village livelihoods that each activity accounts for. Each type of livelihood activity will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Table 2 and Figure 2 shows several significant changes in the relative value of various livelihood activities between 2002 and 2016. A key source of

livelihoods in the villages in 2002 consisted of (usually poorly paid) waged local employment at the tea plantation or in other local formal or informal sector employment. Even though these jobs made a small contribution to household level livelihoods, their aggregate value at village level is notable. The value of local employment waned in both villages to 2016, with a decline of 30% and 53% in Cutwini and Manteku respectively, representing a significant real decline. In Cutwini much of this related specifically to the failure of the parastatal Magwa Tea Plantation, while Manteku showed stronger evidence of out migration, which increased by 68%. Social grants receipt increased in both villages by over 250%, with state cash transfers effectively coming to 'substitute' for declines in local employment.

Cultivation waned in importance in both villages, but more so in Manteku where field cultivation was abandoned entirely (discussed in the next section). Livestock declined in importance by 20% in Cutwini, but increased slightly in Manteku, due to a sharp local rise in goat production, suited to local grazing conditions. In contrast to most other natural resource based livelihood activities, marine resources use increased in value sharply in both villages. This includes shore angling (with fishing rods), and crayfish and mussel collection, which in total accounted for 3–4% of total livelihoods sources in 2002. By 2016, the total contribution of marine resource use to local livelihoods had increased by approximately 200%, due to increased marketing opportunities, and (in Cutwini) improved angling equipment (discussed later).

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<sup>45</sup> c.f. J. Ferguson, *The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho*, *Man New Series*, 20, 4 (1985) pp. 647–674; L. Bank, *Of Livestock and Deadstock: Entrepreneurship and Tradition on the South African Highveld*. In: D.F. Bryceon and V.

Jamal (Eds.) *Farewell to Farms: De-agrarianisation and Employment in Africa*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, African Studies Research Centre series, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> This may well be different in other areas or neighboring villages.

**Table 2.** Relative importance of various livelihood activities in Cutwini and Manteku (total village averages). Each livelihood activity contributes on average the indicated amount of Rand/month to the total household income. For comparisons, the 2002 figures are adjusted to 2016 inflation (in brackets) and the percent increase/decrease for each village indicated. The total value of cattle in the villages has been averaged in the same way for comparison. All values are in South African Rands.

Type of livelihood activity	Cutwini 2002			Manteku 2002		
	R/month/ household (146 adjusted to 2016 inflation) <sup>47</sup>	Cutwini 2016 R/month/ household (174)	Percent change 2002–2016 <sup>48</sup>	R/month/ household (87 adjusted to 2016 inflation)	Manteku 2016 R/month/ house-hold (99)	Percent change 2002–2016
Local employment	730 (1570)	1101	-30%	768 (1652)	769	-53%
Remittances from labour migrants	87 (187) 30 persons	188 52 persons	+0.5%	87 (187) 19 persons	315 32 persons	+68%
Social grant receipt	189 (406)	1568	+286%	213 (458)	1624	+255%
Cultivation	59 (127)	90	-29%	71 (153)	78	-49%
Livestock, pig & poultry production	115 (247)	198	-20%	73 (157)	167	+6%
Marine resource harvesting	35 (75)	238	+217%	65 (140)	344	+146%
Firewood collection	30 (65)	57	-12%	26 (56)	81	+45%
Average total income/month	1233 (2652)	3399	+28%	1287 (2769)	3336	+20%
Total village value of cattle/12 months <sup>49</sup>	799 (1718)	2681	+56%	307 (660)	1159	+76%

Firewood had a comparatively low value in both villages, but became scarcer in Manteku and was to a larger extent substituted for by electricity in Cutwini by 2016. The values between 2002 and 2016 are however not directly comparable, since they are based on different substitution values (viz. paraffin in 2002 and electricity in 2016, as discussed above).

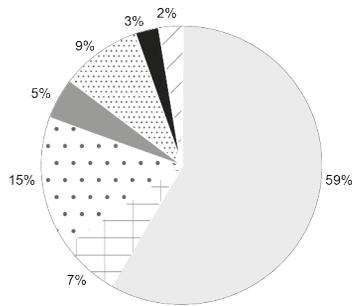
In total, the aggregate, average village total of the imputed value of livelihood activities increased by 20%-28% in Manteku/Cutwini. However, this is to a large extent due to the wider receipt of social grants,

which obscures the waning of many other livelihood opportunities, particularly local employment. The estimated total value of cattle (the bottom row in Table 2) increased by more than 50%, indicating accumulated wealth, however the percentage of households owning cattle simultaneously dropped (see Table 6). For example in Cutwini 30% of cattle are owned by only 2% (3 households). This points to increased village-level social differentiation, with a few households holding better-paying (usually formal sector) employment and larger herds of cattle, whereas most other households have neither employment nor cattle.

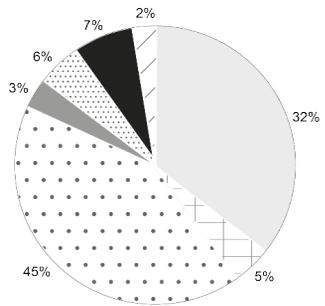
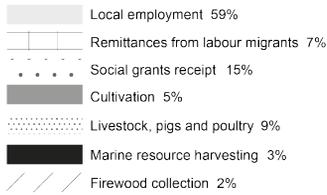
<sup>47</sup> Inflation was calculated using the webpage South African Inflation (<https://inflationcalc.co.za/>) which uses Consumer Price Index data from Stats SA, the national statistical service of South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/>). The inflation was calculated for the dates April 15<sup>th</sup> 2002 and April 15<sup>th</sup> 2016, approximately in the middle of data collection both years.

<sup>48</sup> Percent increase/decrease was calculated using the figures from 2002 that have been adjusted to inflation. Example for calculating employment Cutwini:  $1570 - 1101 = 469 > 469 / 1570 = 0.298 = -30\%$ .

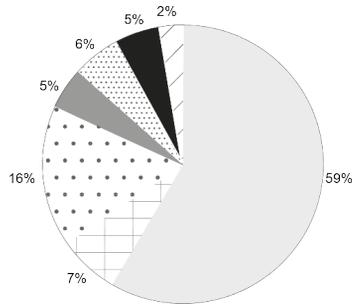
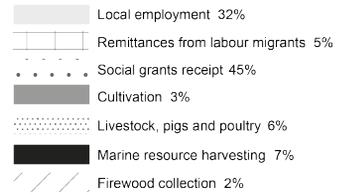
<sup>49</sup> Total value of cattle in the village was calculated based on if all the cattle were sold on the market. Cattle are included in the livestock calculation only based on their meat value. This is further discussed in the text.



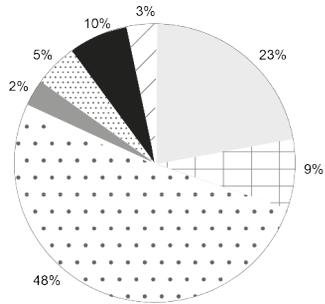
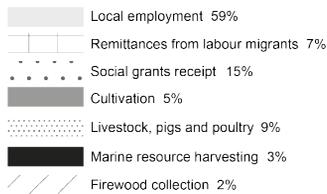
**CUTWINI 2002**



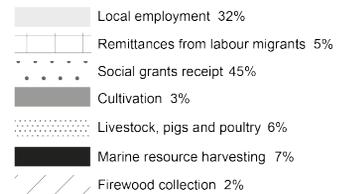
**CUTWINI 2016**



**MANTEKU 2002**



**MANTEKU 2016**



**Figure 2.** Pie charts showing the share that different livelihood activities have in the total village-level livelihood portfolio, for 2002 and 2016, in Cutwini and Manteku.

The pie charts in Figure 2 show that the relative value of livelihoods sources have changed significantly, with local employment the most important contributor at village level in 2002, eclipsed by social grants by 2016. Even when the value of migrant remittances is added to the local employment earnings, social grants retain their primacy. Natural resource based livelihood activities changed little relative to other sources of livelihood making, with the exception of marine resource use increasing in value, due to improved equipment, prices and marketing opportunities.

The results of this analysis show the trend of declining cultivation and employment and increased reliance on social grants observed elsewhere<sup>50</sup>, to be true also for these villages, with developments however being worse in Manteku. Shackleton and Luckert, presenting on a survey of 170 households from two villages in Eastern Cape in 2011–12, make similar calculations of income and arrive at similar figures for remittances, cultivation, livestock, and natural resources (even if the precise composition of natural resources appears unclear)<sup>51</sup>. A significant difference between that work and the present study is the higher contribution of local employment in Cutwini and Manteku, although it is unclear if they have included poverty relief and public works in local employment (as we have in the current study). In their findings, dependence on social grants is even higher than in our case. Manteku, where half of local jobs were lost and not replaced by other employment, is more similar to the villages presented by Shackleton and Luckert, suggesting that it might be Cutwini that is the outlier, especially in terms of access to (however erratic) local employment at the Magwa Tea Plantation.

A reflection of the uneven livelihoods related development is that Manteku had also fallen behind Cutwini in terms of housing quality and asset ownership (Table 1). In the project feedback discussions held in 2018, Manteku's villagers were unsurprised at hearing about the negative trend at village level since 2002 and described their reliance on child support grants and pensions: 'All we have here is the child grant, if you have a secondary school child you send the money there [to where the child is lodging] and you are left here drinking water', a woman said during the discussions. Even comparatively educated young people such as the research assistants have little realistic prospect of

securing anything other than short-term piece work. Despair and disappointment with the government was voiced, including criticism of the eviction of the cottage owners and the litany of failed development projects, detailed above.

After this discussion of how livelihood activities have changed relative to each other in the two villages, the following section looks closely at how each specific livelihood activity changed between 2002 to 2016, and considers the potential future trajectories of each.

### Changes in the major livelihood activities 2002–2016

This section presents in-depth discussion, including changes over time, of each type of livelihood activity, including local and migrant employment, social grant receipt, cultivation (horticulture), livestock (including poultry) production, marine resource harvesting and firewood collection.

#### Local employment

As mentioned above, attaining employment locally is a key aspiration in the villages, which is why it is here analysed distinctively from migrant work (outside the village).<sup>52</sup> A discernible group of village youth do not express plans for urban migration. Instead, they articulate a desire to remain in the village, but they do want to improve their lives and establish independent households. However, both matrimony and building a homestead are seen as impossible in the absence of wage income.

Local employment is divided into four sub-categories (see Table 3): public sector employment; formal sector employment; public employment schemes and informal sector employment (including self-employment). This disaggregation is helpful as the earnings, employment conditions and security associated with each differs significantly.<sup>53</sup>

In each household surveyed, everyone who reported working was categorized in terms of type of employment and earnings estimated based on locally-informed estimates of average salaries (the survey did not elicit salary data, but the earnings of common occupations are knowable).<sup>54</sup> An aggregated charts of local employment is presented in Table 3 (with a more detailed chart in Appendix 1). The table reveals quite

<sup>50</sup> For example, Neves and du Toit, 'Rural livelihoods in South Africa'.

<sup>51</sup> Shackleton and Luckert, 'Changing livelihoods and landscapes'.

<sup>52</sup> 'Local employment' is defined as work in the village, or to which it is possible to commute daily.

<sup>53</sup> Note 'Formal sector employment' refers private sector formal employment. While public sector employment is almost invariably 'formal', it is associated with superior earnings, employment

conditions and security. Hence the two are helpfully distinguished here.

<sup>54</sup> In the vast majority of cases unadjusted 2002 data are used, however, in a few specific cases adjustments were made, to retrospectively improve 2002 salary data. Teachers' salaries specifically were systematically underreported in 2002, and adjusted upwards after additional enquires and documentary confirmation.

different trajectories of local employment in the two villages.

In Cutwini, public sector employment increased slightly, and wages appear higher than in the past. This is mainly due to the expansion of employment attached to local schools, particularly as assistant teachers, and in the school feeding programme. The number of Ntsubane State Forest employees locally resident declined from 2002 to 2016. However, the most striking decline in formal employment was due to job losses at a parastatal Magwa tea plantation in 2002, wracked by widely reported mismanagement.<sup>55</sup> Many employees left by 2016 due to low and erratic paid wages (which had however improved again by 2018). Public employment schemes also increased in

the village, with several projects (including road repair) locally based between 2002 and 2016.

Larger shifts in employment reflect how some (especially with comparatively higher levels of education) secure more remunerative jobs, while unskilled jobs such as at the tea plantation disappeared, leaving many households bereft of any wage income. The expansion of social grants (primarily the Child Support Grant) partially substituted for this, and trickled into the local economy, sustaining some retail, transport and building services. The number of villagers engaged in informal work increased in Cutwini, earning incomes on average higher than for formal employment, and double than incomes from public employment schemes. Informal employment is thus a comparatively important activity in Cutwini.

**Table 3.** Local employment in different categories in Cutwini and Manteku, the number of persons involved in each employment category and an approximated monthly village total income in each employment category. Comparison 2002 and 2016 with comments about changes. Village totals and averages in the bottom row.

Local employment by type	Approx. total income R/month (no. of persons in this employment)				Comments
	Cutwini 2002	Cutwini 2016	Manteku 2002	Manteku 2016	
Public sector employment <sup>56</sup>	40 000 (10)	83 000 (13)	14 000 (8)	30 100 (6)	State, including school employees (incl. low skilled/part-time support staff).
Formal employment	31 500 (51)	33 000 (10)	17 600 (18)	15 300 (5)	Tea plantation, daily commuters to town, employed drivers etc.
Public employment schemes	11 600 (18)	25 240 (41)	8 700 (12)	10 700 (13)	Incl. Coast Care, home-based care, road building schemes etc.
Informal employment (for others or self-employment)	23 500 (13)	50 250 (25)	26 500 (13)	20 000 (9)	Local shop, taxi owner and driver, tourism, sewing, building houses, child care etc.
Total for village	106 600 (92)	191 490 (89)	66 800 (51)	76 100 (33)	Fewer jobs, especially in Manteku.
Average by number of households R/month/household (persons working/household)	730 (0,63)	1101 (0,51)	768 (0,59)	769 (0,33)	Income per household has decreased if adjusted for inflation, but jobs per household have decreased more.

Manteku had different patterns of local employment, with no increase in public sector employment, mainly due to local state forest and nature conservation offices closing. Formal employment opportunities waned as a road building project ceased, and the (illegal) holiday cottages that previously hired locals were demolished by the state. Furthermore, the expansion of various public employment schemes (which improved con-

ditions in Cutwini), appear to largely bypass Manteku—a common local complaint. Informal sector activities also appeared particularly constrained by the stagnation of other employment and incomes in Manteku (even if remaining notable relative to other categories).

Comparing the two village totals, employment-derived incomes in Cutwini amounted, cumulatively,

<sup>55</sup> R. Hartle, 'Magwa Tea Estate fights to stay afloat' *Daily Dispatch*, 16 May, (2016). <https://www.dispatch-live.co.za/news/2016-05-16-magwa-tea-estate-fights-to-stay-afloat/>. See also Kepe, 'Magwa Tea Venture'.

<sup>56</sup> Public sector employers usually receive relatively generous employment benefits and often have high levels of (consumer) debt deducted from their salary. This leads to underreporting and makes it difficult to accurately record their earnings.

to approximately R107 000/month in 2002, while the equivalent sum in Manteku was R67 000/month (which had higher incomes per household). While the two villages were similar in terms of local employment incomes in 2002, by 2016 they diverged. Local employment earnings increased to R191 000/month for Cutwini, but rose only marginally in Manteku to R 76000/month, a reduction in real earnings after inflation (see Table 2). There has been a decrease in both villages in terms of people in local employment—from 0,63 persons working per household to 0,51 in Cutwini and, more dramatically, from 0,59 to 0,33 in Manteku. Also, jobs per household has decreased more than income/household, i.e. that more persons are unemployed in 2016, and inequality has likely increased.

The two villages have thus had quite different trajectories of employment in the intervening 14 years. Cutwini has experienced increased social differentiation, where households with secure employment are relatively better off, while others increasingly have no or precarious employment and/or are reliant on social grants. Manteku effectively experienced a shift in reliance from employment to social grants, with two out of three households reporting no employment-derived earners whatsoever (including public employment schemes or informal economic activities) by 2016. This precipitous decline was readily described by village residents in interviews. It is also reflected in patterns of increased out migration, discussed in the next section.

#### Remittances from labour migrants

Table 2 reveals the monetary sum labour migrants contribute to their rural households in both years.<sup>57</sup> While the 2002 sum happens to be the same for both villages (R87), it has been averaged by different number of households, which potentially obscures significant differences between villages. Cutwini's remittances were sent by 30 labour migrants in 2002 and was a higher sum per month per migrant than for Manteku where 19 migrants sent remittances. Approximately 20% of households, in both villages, received urban remittances. By 2016, both villages saw an increase in migration, with a third of households reporting an out-migrating member sending money. The sums remitted decreased significantly in Cutwini by 2016, from the inflation-adjusted sum R910/month/migrant to R629/month, but increased in

Manteku from R856/month to R975/month. This probably reflects households in Cutwini having access to some local incomes, with those in Manteku more dependent on remittances. The percentage of (non-disabled) working age adults who claimed in the survey to be unemployed remained steady at approximate 65% in Manteku between 2002 and 2016. Some of the villagers who lost their jobs in the intervening thus years left to seek work in urban areas. This is confirmed by interviews, which reveal the powerful role of migrant networks. Several men in Manteku were recruited into a specific construction company in Durban, owned by a former cottage owner.

Manteku appears characterised by patterns of long term, male (often household head) migration, including into the male-dominated construction sector. This is redolent of apartheid and colonial era patterns of formal male labour migration unaccompanied by family members, which historically facilitated, and necessitated, re-investment in rural households. In contrast, Cutwini more closely typifies post-apartheid patterns of informal, contingent and oscillating migration, including of youth and women. Cutwini's migrants appear less likely to invest in establishing independent rural homesteads. These subtle dynamics occur against patterns of urbanisation, wherein remittances remain part of larger, complex household livelihood strategies, shaped by contextual, gendered and generational dynamics that can only be glimpsed here. The research suggests the complex interaction between waning rural employment opportunities and urban migration, where also social grants have become key resources to rural households and have reduced the pressure on urban kin to provide for rural families while struggling to survive on the periphery of the urban economy.

#### Social grants

As discussed above, the most significant change in livelihood portfolios within the villages since 2002 has been the expansion of social grants. The percentage of household receiving a welfare grant has increased from approximately 30% to over 85% in both villages. In Table 4 the grant receipt (disaggregated by grant) is shown for absolute numbers and the percentage of total households. Most notable is the increase in Child Support Grant, available locally since 2002.<sup>58</sup> There has also been increased uptake of the Old Age Pension due to easier application procedures, and a lowering of

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<sup>57</sup> In the 2002 survey households were only asked if they were receiving money from migrants and in the calculations presented in Hajdu (2006) the full amount of migrant worker salaries (then reported as ranging between R1000-R2500) were included. Here we however have chosen to include only the sum likely to be remitted to the rural household every month (acknowledging that these can often be intermittent or seasonal, or in response to a

specific demand and depend on the relationship between the migrant and the household). The amount remitted in 2002 was discussed both back then as well as in 2016-18 with local informants.

<sup>58</sup> The villages were in 2002 in beginning of the application process for Child Support Grant. A few households had received it for a month or two before the 2002 survey was completed, while others had not received it yet. We however show it as 0% since it would otherwise give a false picture of how many households were eligible for the grant in 2002.

the age eligibility threshold for men. Some increases are evident for the Disability Grant (adults with a temporary or permanent disability) and the small numbers of households securing the Care Dependency Grant (for disabled children) and Foster Care Grant.

Expanded social grant receipt prevented many households from sinking deeper in poverty and deprivation between 2002 and 2016. Analysis of the household survey showed significantly fewer report worry about food insecurity (compared to 2002), and the qualitative analysis points to improved social and relational aspects such as increased sense of dignity and positive effects on gender relations (such as women's autonomy, bargaining and decision-making power).<sup>59</sup> As grant recipient women are often resource providers,

South Africa is experiencing 'reversed dependencies' in many households.<sup>60</sup> Regular grant income enables recipients to take on greater responsibility for others, and people may cluster around grant recipients as a response to vulnerability.<sup>61</sup>

Table 4 (below) shows that amidst deagrarianisation and dwindling formal employment, social grants represents a major resource for many households. Williams (2018) characterises this as a "post-wage existence" and argues that the role of the state as dispenser of grants (and to a lesser extent public employment schemes) will likely continue to be crucial to the survival of rural populations under present economic and structural conditions.<sup>62</sup>

**Table 4.** Changes in social grants receipt between 2002 and 2016, showing but absolute number of households and the percent of total households for each village. The three grants with 0% in 2002 had not yet reached the the villages at that time.

Breakdown of grants (no. and % of households)	Cutwini 2002	Cutwini 2016	Manteku 2002	Manteku 2016
Old Age Pension	39 (27%)	66 (38%)	23%	37 (37%)
Child Support Grant	0%	116 (67%)	0%	73 (74%)
Disability grant	4 (3%)	16 (9%)	7%	6 (6%)
Foster Care Grant	0%	15 (9%)	0%	4 (4%)
Care Dependency Grant	0%	2 (1%)	0%	2 (2%)

### Cultivation

The dwindling value of cultivation in livelihood portfolios as shown in Table 2 is also reflected in Table 5 that shows cultivation related data. It reveals most households abandoned their fields between 2002 and 2016 and that 'own produce' a part of staple food and vegetable consumption dwindled. It shows, however, also that smaller scale homestead or 'kitchen' gardening

has not decreased significantly, with crop diversity remaining stable in Cutwini (albeit declining in Manteku). These findings are consistent with other findings on continuation, or even 'intensification', of small homestead plots<sup>63</sup>, while extensive field cultivation, particularly of staple cereal crops, has declined.<sup>64</sup> As noted earlier, field and garden agricultural production in the Eastern Cape is a well-researched topic, with key works noting declining cultivation<sup>65</sup>, and drawing continued interest.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> S. Granlund and T. Hochfeld 'That Child Support Grant Gives Me Powers': Exploring Social and Relational Aspects of Cash Transfers in South Africa in Times of Livelihood Change, *The Journal of Development Studies*, Published online 14 August 2019.

<sup>60</sup> E. Bähre, Liberation and Redistribution: Social Grants, Commercial Insurance, and Religious Riches in South Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2011, 53, 2 (2011), pp. 371–392; J. Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Granlund and Hochfeld, 'Child Support Grant Gives Me Powers'.

<sup>61</sup> Bähre, 'Liberation and Redistribution'.

<sup>62</sup> M. Williams, Women in Rural South Africa: A Post-wage Existence and the Role of the State, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 37 (2018) pp. 392–410.

<sup>63</sup> M. Andrew and R.C. Fox, Undercultivation and Intensification in the Transkei: A Case Study of Historical Changes in the use of Arable Land in Nomp, Shixini. *Development Southern Africa*, 21 (2004), pp. 687–706.

<sup>64</sup> Blair, et al. 'Cropland abandonment'

<sup>65</sup> Beinart, 'Transkeian Smallholders and Agrarian Reform'.

<sup>66</sup> Shackleton et al., 'Deactivation of Field Cultivation'; Blair, et al. 'Cropland Abandonment'; Hebinck et al., 'More Than Just Fields'.

**Table 5.** Cultivation of gardens and fields in Cutwini and Manteku in 2002 and 2016. Absolute numbers and/or percent of total households in respective village.

Cultivation in gardens and fields	Cutwini 2002	Cutwini 2016	Manteku 2002	Manteku 2016
Households with gardens	138 (95%)	149 (86%)	61 (70%)	62 (62%)
Households planting in the field	91 (62%)	3 (2%)	58 (67%)	5 (5%)
Average number of different crops + fruit trees	4 + 2	4 + 3	5 + 1	3 + 1
Households growing more than 75% of their own maize and/or vegetable consumption <sup>67</sup>	2%	0,5/0%	5%	0/0%
Households not growing any of their own maize and/or vegetable consumption	9%	33/38%	10%	35/41%

Regarding the sharp decline in field cultivation of staple crops, villagers offer varied and complex explanations for this, echoing those discussed by de la Hey and Beinart who examined a neighbouring village. Environmental challenges to horticulture in Cutwini and Manteku include bushpigs, monkeys and moles (neither of which are much deterred by fencing), and untended livestock, due to near universal school enrolment. The sub-tropical weather is unpredictable with dry spells and heavy rains leading to waterlogging, and the coastal soils are sandy and saline.

The larger structural and economic context also disincentivises local cultivation. South Africa's capital intensive, mechanised large-scale commercial maize farmers (farms sizes of several thousand hectares are common, compared to the 0,5–3 ha of smallholders) produce maize at a scale and cost unattainable by smallholders.<sup>68</sup> Local agricultural development projects attempts at 'modernising' smallholder cultivation through mechanisation, inputs (high yield seed, fertilizer) can paradoxically depress the profitability of local, due to difficulties in marketing surpluses and higher risks of crop failure with seeds unsuited to local conditions.<sup>69</sup> Locally improved access to rural small towns, and increased disbursement of social grants not in cash, but electronically including in supermarkets making mass-produced foods cheaper and easier to access. For small-scale village farmers, field cultivation is a thus high-risk, low-profit activity, with the same commodities obtainable in supermarket chains. It is worth noting here that even agricultural development programmes with large budgets, machinery and modern inputs repeatedly have failed to make any profit in Cutwini, as explained above.

The large-scale abandonment of field cultivation is often attributed to socio-cultural issues as well, with

young people reportedly aspiring to 'real' (i.e. waged) work, even if their sole income is informal 'piece jobs' they remain disinclined to engage in cultivation.<sup>70</sup> The older generation often lamented youth aversion or apathy to farming, sometimes ascribing it to social grant receipt, despite the substantial challenges involved in farming. Sizwe, a married man in his 40's, accounted for his generation's reluctance to engage in farming, in terms of their sense of freedom from what had previously been a compulsion for survival: "We've been planting most of our lives and we regard that as a hard work. [...] We've been planting out of need, and now if you have money, you feel like you are free from planting, and you can just buy ... anything you want!" (Interview, November 2018).

However, Sizwe also reflected on the next generation: "maybe they will plant because they have not had an opportunity to use the soil, because they grew up when their parents were not planting. Maybe they want to know what it feels like to go and harvest your own crops from your own garden. [...] Yes... the next generation will plant. They will feel it is fun..." (Interview, November 2018). Scholars are however uncertain about the future possibilities of a revival of field cultivation. Shackleton and Hebinck argue declines in smallholder farming are not linear and that there is significant variation across individuals as well as time and space, which would allow for a rise in the future<sup>71</sup>. However, Shackleton *et al.* are pessimistic over prospects for the 'reactivation' of smallholder field cultivation, especially with the intervening loss of knowledge and skills<sup>72</sup>. De la Hey and Beinart note that any revival of smallholder cultivation is undercut by the dissipation of social arrangements that historically facilitated production (e.g. communal work parties,

<sup>67</sup> In 2002: maize and vegetables together, in 2017 maize separate from vegetables – presented in chart with 'maize/vegetables.'

<sup>68</sup> Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'.

<sup>69</sup> Jacobson, 'From Betterment to Bt Maize'; Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'; Fischer and Hajdu, 'Does Raising Maize Yields'.

<sup>70</sup> De la Hey and Beinart, 'Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned'.

<sup>71</sup> S. Shackleton, and P. Hebinck, Through the 'Thick and Thin' of farming on the Wild Coast, South Africa. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61 (2018), pp. 277–289.

<sup>72</sup> Shackleton *et al.*, 'Deactivation of Field Cultivation'.

school-aged children herding livestock), and household labour shortages, amidst adult outmigration<sup>73</sup>.

It is important to point out that small-scale cultivation in fields in the former homelands may not be a worthwhile activity in most places. The question should perhaps be why people hang on to cultivation rather than why they abandon it. The above quote about how it feels to harvest your own vegetables point to some of the ambivalence in relation to cultivation. Accounts concerning farming are often intertwined with sentiment and narratives of belonging and attachment to rural homes. Urban migrants can spend decades investing in their rural home (e.g. house-building, fencing, acquiring livestock etc.), planning to return and engage in agricultural production. Others have noted how the potent rural 'landscape of home', including place-based ties of ancestral belonging, continues to have strong cultural and social resonances for many.<sup>74</sup> Research rural landscapes increasingly represent a consumptive rather than productive space, with the former 'agrarian lifestyle' eclipsed by 'rural lifestyles'.<sup>75</sup> Agrarian cultures and imaginaries however endure despite the disengagement from day-to-day agricultural activities.<sup>76</sup> The rational abandonment by many villagers of marginal field production may therefore have negative consequences for cultural reproduction, identity and belonging.

Even if small-scale production of maize and extensive field crops is increasingly unfeasible, there remains a place for higher value horticulture (vegetables and fruit) production, particularly for own consumption and local resale. Significantly, when global food prices spiked in 2008, kitchen garden cultivation became again sensible, which is probably the reason that Table 5 shows that homestead gardening has not decreased notably. Informants explain how some villagers took the opportunity to diversify incomes through growing a larger variety of crops for sale. Sino, an unmarried man in his 30's explained: "a few people plant like serious planting, like the whole garden will be spinach and cabbage... and they sell to us [other villagers]" (Interview, March, 2016).

Calculating inputs and local sale prices for a household cultivating a 0,5 ha garden in 2016 concluded a good harvest could earn a successful producer up to R 10 000 annually. Such a sum is a noteworthy income—almost comparable in value to receiving a state old age

pension—even if the labour invested would be substantial. When enquiring after why more villages did not therefore cultivate and sell vegetables, the discussion often turned to the familiar litany of environmental constraints on farming generally. Local conditions could also differ significantly across even a single village. We recorded reports of the occupiers of new homestead sites finding their enthusiasm for horticultural production dashed by waterlogged, sandy, or mole-infested soils. The opportunity to earn income from cultivation thus requires the convergence of labour, capital, skills and favourable locations and soils.

In relation to intermittent local narratives concerning social grants disincentivising large-scale farming, the converse appeared true of kitchen gardening activities. In a forthcoming article, the authors report on a regression analysis of the survey data, revealing a correlation between receiving the Child Support Grant and investments in agricultural production, such as the acquisition of small hand-worked ploughs/cultivators for easier gardening and a marked increase in crop diversity<sup>77</sup>. The positive effects of social grant receipt on garden cultivation has also been found by others.<sup>78</sup>

Looking to the future, while it is unlikely that cultivation will be a primary or even significant source of livelihood making for most households, food price pressures may offer opportunities to supplement (or conserve) household income through more intensive horticultural cultivation in home gardens. While previous, externally funded, large scale agricultural development interventions have repeatedly proved ineffectual,<sup>79</sup> there remains scope for modest, focused interventions, judiciously tailored to villagers needs and capabilities. Village level production seems unlikely to become competitive with the agro-industrially produced staples and cereals (such as maize), readily obtainable in supermarkets. In contrast, the own production of fresh produce (fruits and vegetables) is already of value—both pecuniary and nutritional—to some village farmers.

#### Livestock and poultry production

In Table 2 and Figure 2, livestock production was sustained and did not decline to the same extent as cultivation, suggesting it to remain a worthwhile activity. Yet there are marked variations between the villages, and livestock types. In Table 6, animal

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<sup>73</sup> De la Hey and Beinart, *Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned?*; Neves and du Toit, *Rural livelihoods in South Africa*.

<sup>74</sup> V.A Masterson, *Sense of Place and Culture in the Landscape of Home: Understanding Social-ecological Dynamics on the Wild Coast, South Africa*. Diss. Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2016; Hebinck, *et al.*, 'More Than Just fields'.

<sup>75</sup> Hebinck, *et al.*, *More Than Just fields*.

<sup>76</sup> Shackleton *et al.*, 'Deactivation of Field Cultivation'.

<sup>77</sup> F. Hajdu, S. Granlund, D. Neves, T. Hochfeld, F. Amuakwa-Mensah and E. Sandström (forthcoming), *Cash transfers for sustainable rural livelihoods? Examining the long-term productive effects of the Child Support Grant in South Africa. World Development Perspectives*.

<sup>78</sup> Fay, 'Cultivators in Action, Siyazondla Inaction?'; Jacobson, 'From Betterment to Bt Maize'.

<sup>79</sup> c.f. Fischer and Hajdu, 'Does Raising Maize Yields?'; de La Hey and Beinart, 'Why Have South African Smallholders Largely Abandoned'.

ownership expressed as a percentage of households for both villages and years is presented, and total numbers of each animal type given for 2016<sup>80</sup>. It shows cattle, chicken and goats to be the most common animals in both villages in terms of both absolute numbers and percentage of households that own them. In Cutwini, sheep and horse ownership is also notable. The data show household's cattle ownership to have declined in both villages, with the caveat that this disguises an almost constant total number of cattle (as estimated in 2002 by informants but not recorded for each household). Instead cattle ownership appears more concentrated in fewer (and better off) households. Slaughtering of cattle for ceremonial purposes has

reportedly declined since 2002, both due to fewer funerals as the AIDS pandemic has been brought under control with anti-retroviral drugs and due to a move away from traditions that require slaughtering, especially reported in Cutwini. Milking, which happened on a limited scale in 2002 and was used for making sourmilk has all but ceased completely in both villages as reported by informants. Cattle are used also for other purposes, such as ploughing, even if the value of this has also declined as people have abandoned field cultivation (and agricultural development projects provided with tractors in Cutwini). For the few who have larger gardens, cattle are still a significant resource for animal traction.

**Table 6.** Animal ownership in Cutwini and Manteku, changes between 2002 and 2016. Percent of total household owning a certain type of animal given for both years, total numbers of animals were only recorded in 2016.

Animal type	Cutwini			Manteku		
	2002 % of total 146 hhs owning	2016 Total number	2016 % of total 174 hhs owning	2002 % of total 86 hhs owning	2016 Total number	2016 % of total 99 hhs owning
Cow	43 %	622	33%	30 %	162	28%
Horse	12 %	21	8%	6 %	4	1%
Donkey	0%	5	1%	3 %	0	0%
Sheep	35 %	296	23.5%	0%	35	4%
Goat	32 %	373	32%	17 %	277	46%
Pig	49 %	28	10%	51 %	36	10%
Chicken	64 %	611	54.5%	78 %	339	50%
Duck	5 %	73	4.5%	0%	3	1%
Geese	0%	41	3%	3 %	7	1%

Cutwini's better endowment of grazing is reflected in higher proportions of households that own cattle and sheep. No sheep ownership was recorded in Manteku in 2002, and only a few households had acquired them by 2016. Instead, goat production increased sharply—and goats are better suited to the thick bush and steep topography. Andile, an unmarried man in his 20's, proffered further explanations for now preferring goats, especially for ceremonial slaughter—"a goat makes a lot of noise when slaughtered—we believe they are connecting with the ancestors' (Interview, November 2018).

Pig numbers declined sharply in both villages due to an outbreak of Classical Swine Fever, which prompted disease control through government culling in 2005. The local pigs were asymptomatic however, which along with poor communication with the villagers and unmet promises of compensation fuelled local resentment and deterred people from acquiring pigs again. Declines in poultry keeping are difficult to

account for, but may represent the vicissitudes of poultry production and diseases.

Overall, livestock production declined somewhat, but mainly it shifted in various ways and adapted to new realities and local variations. The significance of meat from own livestock production is more than just its contribution of meat value to livelihoods. It is nutritionally a significant source of high quality animal protein and (especially in relation to large livestock) underpins important local processes of sharing and social reciprocity.

#### Marine resource harvesting

As indicated in relation to Figure 2, the value of marine resource use increased sharply in the villages between 2002 and 2016, in contrast to other natural resource based activities. In Cutwini, this was due to a legitimate daily buyer in crayfish season. In response, many young men and several women began diving for crayfish. In Manteku, with no such buyer, crayfish

<sup>80</sup> Absolute livestock figures were not recorded in 2002.

collecting remained low and prices erratic. The contribution of fishing to local livelihoods increased in value in both villages, but for different reasons. In Cutwini angling equipment improved when inexpensive manufactured angling gear became available in town—“before we used to make fishing rods with sticks from the forest [...] now they all have fancy rods from town and hooks and all those things”, Sizwe explained (Interview, November 2018). In Manteku, on the other hand, beneficent middle class holiday cottage owners passed old fishing gear down to villagers back in 2002, before the government demolition of their holiday cottages. This angling equipment eventually wore out or broke and Manteku’s villagers, with generally less monetary income than in Cutwini, were less able to replace it. In Manteku, fishing was also boosted by electrification, as it was now possible to stockpile and refrigerate sufficient fish to warrant a weekly sales trip into town.

From Table 7 it is evident that there has been no major increase in the proportion of families engaged in marine resource use, but rather those who do, increased the frequency of their harvesting. Those reporting to utilise marine resources ‘very often’ increased sharply, especially for crayfish and mussel collecting, along with fishing. Marine resource harvesting is a ‘fall back’ strategy for several of the able bodied and unemployed. In Manteku villagers pointed out, during discussion, the connection between the declining job opportunities and increased marine resource use. A caveat is that the majority of households in Cutwini do not harvest any marine resources, a pattern equally true of angling in Manteku. Finally, in addition to boosting local incomes, marine resources undoubtedly contribute significantly to nutrition of those who are able to eat them.

**Table 7.** Marine resource use in Cutwini and Manteku. Frequency of resource use is indicated in four categories (Very Often, Often, Seldom, and Never), and total users (i.e. the sum of the first three categories) given. Percentage are of total households in each village.

Resource use	Village	Very often		Often		Seldom		Never		Total % users	
		2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016	2002	2016
Fishing	Cutwini	2 %	12%	18 %	14%	3 %	3%	77 %	71%	23 %	29%
	Manteku	12 %	16%	37 %	29%	3 %	2%	48 %	52%	52 %	47%
Crayfish collection	Cutwini	5 %	9%	20 %	11%	0 %	2%	75 %	78%	25 %	22%
	Manteku	3 %	21%	36 %	32%	14 %	1%	47 %	44%	53 %	54%
Mussel collection	Cutwini	0 %	15%	22 %	13%	8 %	2%	70 %	69%	30 %	30%
	Manteku	5 %	18%	56 %	39%	5 %	3%	34 %	39%	66 %	60%

#### Firewood collection

Collecting firewood contributed a steady 2% of livelihoods resources in 2002, even with increasing use of paraffin and bottled liquid petroleum gas. By 2016, households frequently used electricity for cooking. However, firewood was still an important energy source, because of the cost of electricity (and appliances), and preference for preparing some traditional (long cooking) dishes over an open fire. As discussed above (see Table 2), the value of firewood as a resource was higher in Manteku, due to it being scarcer and a greater proportion of households using it more frequently. Research assistants elaborated that within larger households and amongst older, more traditionally-minded, household heads, firewood was frequently used in Manteku. Smaller households, with younger household heads (especially in Cutwini) were more inclined to cook with electricity.

#### Conclusion: Changing rural livelihoods and future trajectories

This study drew on a broad livelihoods perspective to examine rural livelihoods and livelihood change in detail, within two rural villages in a former homeland of South Africa. The study quantified key activities, gauged their relative value contribution to livelihoods and discerned patterns of change over time. To do so detailed household surveys in 2002 and 2016, were combined with in-depth ethnographic fieldwork and interviews. Here, the findings are used to think about prospective, future livelihood trajectories.

To recapitulate, in 2002 local employment (albeit often poorly paid and erratic) was the most important activity supporting local livelihoods in both villages. By 2016, there were fewer but better-remunerated jobs, which contributed to local processes of social

differentiation and likely to rising local income inequality. While many villagers felt their living conditions had improved in 2016 compared to 2002, a large group felt their lives had become worse—35% of households in both villages. Income and asset data lend plausibility to this self-assessment. The loss of employment opportunities was (partially) blamed by local villagers on the actions of the state, even if indirectly, such as through the demolition of (illegal) cottages and more stringent enforcement of marine protection regulations. Perceptions, and grievances, were furthermore often specific. In the case of Cutwini, it was the failure and loss of secure employment at the adjacent parastatal tea plantation, whereas in Manteku a paucity of public employment schemes (compared to nearby villages) was cited. These need to be understood against a succession of (often high profile) failed development projects, which were readily regarded as failures of the post-apartheid state to deliver on its social contract and electoral promises.

Over the preceding years of the research, social grant receipt rose by over 250% to become the single most important resource underpinning livelihoods within the villages. Amidst declining local employment, social grants have effectively prevented many rural households from descent into deeper destitution and impoverishment. Yet they are insufficient to significantly improve or elevate villager's standard of living. After all, social transfers for specific groups (viz. youth, disabled and elderly) were never intended to be the sole or main household income. The state, as viewed locally, thus occupies an ambiguous place. It is seen as restricting and curtailing livelihood opportunities, but simultaneously provides social transfers (and employment schemes) essential to local survival and livelihoods.

The changes in natural resource based activities underscore how households continue engaging in gainful activities, and rationally adapt or abandon those that are not. For example, households abandoned extensive field production of low value crops, but some increased higher-value horticulture production for own use or sale. Detailed enquiry suggests the households that continue to engage in cultivation, enjoy better conditions for production (e.g. resources for inputs, favourable sites, fertile land, sound fences, available household labour, etc.). In much the same way, marine resource harvesting intensified when marketing opportunities emerged, as did goat keeping in Manteku when local grazing proved suitable. While the relative value of livelihoods calculations presented in Table 2 and Figure 2 show that natural resource based

livelihoods contribute a limited quantum to total livelihoods relative to local employment and social grants, it is important to remember that these money-based calculations do not consider food security dimensions or potentially superior nutritional quality of own production food. This is in addition to other values, such as the multifunctional values of cattle e.g. for ploughing, and the cultural and landscape values of sustained agrarian practices.

Livelihoods informed research offers substantial contributions to understanding the former homeland rural areas. Several previous studies have examined the decline of agricultural production and focused on the task of directly remediating this, but often at the expense of meaningfully considering other local employment opportunities (including the 'non-farm' informal sector). This is a focus at odds with the reality in the focal research context, where the trickling decline in the minor contribution of cultivation to local livelihoods from 5% (2002) to 2–3% (2016) of total value of livelihood activities is dwarfed by the plummet in local employment from 60% to 23–32% and the upswing in welfare transfers from 15–17% to 46–49% (Figure 2). Even with successful efforts for agricultural development, it remains unlikely that 'reinvigorated' cultivation can readily make a substantive impact on local livelihoods. Hence, there is a need for further in-depth study, to map to what extent the results of the present study holds true on a wider scale.

What then are the likely future livelihood trajectories for these villages, and others in former homelands? Examining the former QwaQwa homeland, Slater described how the majority of households face pathways of decline and impoverishment with only a few able to engage in accumulation<sup>81</sup>. Long term decline or stasis, is also a likely future for many households in the focal villages, especially in light of declining employment and in the absence of substantial changes in policy, structural and economic conditions. Consistent with national patterns, social differentiation and income inequality appear to be rising.<sup>82</sup> The 'left behind' households are therefore likely to remain poor, despite improvements in assets and access to services. In the face of socio-economic injustice, redistributive efforts, predicated on social justice have expanded during the last decades, most notably in the form of social grants from the state.<sup>83</sup> While the ameliorative aspects of social grants are significant, they only extend to some (viz. the elderly, children and people living with disabilities), crucially excluding able-bodied adults. Unsurprisingly, Shackleton and Luckert report young men living alone to be the least food secure<sup>84</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Slater, 'Differentiation and Diversification'.

<sup>82</sup> S. Schotte, R. Zizzamia, M. Leibbrandt, Social Stratification, Life Chances and Vulnerability to Poverty in South Africa. SALDRU Working Paper Number 208. University of Cape Town: SALDRU, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> T. Hochfeld, *Cash Care and Social Justice: A Study of the Child Support Grant*, Diss. Wits University, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Shackleton and Luckert, 'Changing Livelihoods and Landscapes'.

Nothing in the results suggests the large group of unemployed can look forward to a future pathway of increased access to worthwhile livelihood activities locally.

Social grant and pension income undoubtedly generates modest local multiplier effects, for some services, trade and horticultural production, yet these are small and insufficient to compensate for the dearth of substantive livelihood making opportunities. Natural resource based activities are crucial, but simultaneously limited in their impact on livelihoods. They are also patterned by variable agro-ecological conditions and subject to not only the threat of overexploitation, but competition from outsiders, including larger markets and industrial production system. However, there may be scope for specialization, in horticulture, livestock, poultry production, fishing and marine resources harvesting. Evidence shows how specialisation is already underway where there is profitability and a market, suggesting that future interventions aiming to enhance natural resource based activities need strategies closely aligned to local village level conditions and realities. Interventions ought to

ensure efforts are either focused on enhancing local food security, or producing a marketable product. Previous research has shown that adaptation to local conditions and insufficient attention to marketing is a recurrent weakness of agricultural<sup>85</sup> and income-generation projects.<sup>86</sup>

Despite their relative remoteness, processes of change and contingency loom over both villages. They are likely be markedly affected by the major changes brought by the current (2019) building of the new coastal (N2) highway. To the northeast of the villages, in Xolobeni, plans for destructive strip mining by a transnational firm are not only potentially detrimental to local communities, but violently contested. Each of these developments offers the promise of the new employment opportunities so urgently needed, yet also carries within it the real prospect of local communities' further exclusion and marginalisation. Thus, these villages are likely to remain sites of livelihood change, and may well constitute an interesting and useful case for a follow-up in another decade hence.

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<sup>85</sup> Jacobson, 'The Massive Food Production Programme'; Fischer and Hajdu, 'Does Raising Maize Yields'; Hajdu *et al.*, 'But Tractors Can't Fly'.

<sup>86</sup> Hajdu, 'Local Worlds'.

## Appendix 1. Extra online material connected to the paper

### Changing livelihoods in rural Eastern Cape, South Africa (2002-2016): Diminishing employment and expanding social protection

Flora Hajdu<sup>1</sup>, David Neves<sup>2</sup>, Stefan Granlund<sup>1</sup>

Detailed tables of changes in local employment 2002-2016 in villages Cutwini and Manteku

*Cutwini 2002-2016 Local employment (daily commute possible)*

Employment by type	2002 No. of persons	2002 Approx. income R/month	2016 No. of persons	2016 Approx. income R/month	Comments
<b>Local public sector employment (in/close to village)</b>					
Govt. employee at local state forest	6	15 000 (6 x 2500)	4	20 000 (4 x 5000)	Unqualified work for government
Govt. employee for Cattle dipping 2002/ Fishing catch data monitor 2016	1	1000	1	2500	These are smaller part time employments
School employee (teacher with qualifications; teaching assistant; ABET teacher; teacher at crèche + school feeding scheme cook)	3 -all were qualified	24 000 (3 x 8000)	8 (2+2+2 +1+1)	60 500 (2 x 16000; 2 x 4500; 2x 7000; 3000; 2500)	School has grown with crèche and food programme, and now has Adult Basic Education (ABET)
<b>Local formal employment (in area close to village, daily commute possible)</b>					
Tea Plantation	48	24 000 (48 x 500)	6	12 000 (6 x 2000)	Most people stopped working b/c unpaid salaries, some continue in hope of getting paid
Commutes to nearby town to work in shop/ as mechanic	3	7500 (3 x 2500)	2	9000 (2 x 4500)	Some of them have moved there now
Employed driver			2	12 000 (2 x 6000)	Truck/hospital driver
<b>Local public employment schemes</b>					
Public employment schemes eg. "working for water"	10	6000 (10 x 600)	36	20 160 (36 x 560)	Only working 8 days/ month
Coast care	8	5600 (8 x 700)	2	3400 (2 x 1700)	
Home based care programme			3	1680 (3 x 560)	Only working 8 days/ month
<b>Local informal employment and self-employment</b>					
Tourism (Has informal tour company + employed guides)			3 (1+2)	6500 (4500 + 2 x 1000)	EU project trained one person who now runs own company for hiking
Local shop (+ just selling air-time, drinks, brewing trad. beer)	6	9000 (6 x 1500)	3+5	15 750 (3 x 4000 + 5 x 750)	More people selling small things like airtime and drinks/cigarettes in 2016
Taxi owner + driver	3+2	13 600 (3 x 4000 + 2 x 800)	6	18 000 (6 x 3000)	More taxi owners 2016
Sewing and/or selling clothes	1	400	3	1500 (3 x 500)	More people selling clothes 2016
Building houses, roofing/ thatching	1	500	4	8000 (4 x 2000)	Irregular income, thatching seasonal
Local child care/ domestic work			1	500	People who are better off can now employ others
Total for village (i.e. total individuals with jobs and total aggregated income)	92	106 600	89	191 490 R	Fewer jobs and worse average pay if adjusted to inflation.
Averaged by number of households	0,63	730	0,51	1100	Jobs/household have decreased, but income/household has decreased a bit less

Manteku 2002-2016 Local Employment

Job by type	2002 No. of persons	2002 Appr. income R/month	2016 No. of persons	2016 Appr. income R/month	Comment
<b>Local public sector employment (in/close to village)</b>					
Govt. employee at local state forest	1	2500	-		
Govt. employee for Cattle dipping 2002/ Fishing catch data monitor 2016	1	1000	2	5000 (2 x 2500)	Small part-time employment
School employee (Teacher; clerk; cook and cleaner, all at school)	1	8000	4 (1+1+1+1)	25 100 (16000+5600 +2500+1000)	One qualified teacher both in 2002 and 2016, new jobs introduced
Employee at local nature conservation post	5	2500			Local post has closed
<b>Local formal employment (in area close to village, daily commute possible)</b>					
Tourist camp, company owned (manager + security)			2 (1+1)	5300 (3500 +1800)	New trekking camp in the village in the place of conservation post
Tea plantation			1	2000	Further away
Holiday cottages	9	3600 (9 x 400)	1	1000	Fewer cottages (many were illegally built and have been demolished)
Temporary local building projects	5	5000 (5 x 1000)	-		
Bus conductor 2002/ employed driver 2016	1	1500	1	7000	
Work in Local town	3	7500 (3 x 2500)	0		Moved to local town, counted as labour migrants now
<b>Local public employment schemes</b>					
Road building project	1	1000	10	5600 (10 x 560)	
Coast Care	11	7700 (11 x 700)	3	5100 (3 x 1700)	
<b>Local informal employment</b>					
Local shop (owner of big + small shops)	3 (1+2)	4500 (2500+1000)	5 (1+4)	10 000 (4000+ 4 x 1500)	One big shop making more than other petty trade
Taxi owner/driver	4	16 000 (4 x 4000)	3	9000 (3 x 3000)	
Building houses, roofing/thatching	5	5000 (5 x 1000) (500-1500)	-		Possibly recruited by construction firm in Durban
Iqirha (traditional healer)	1	1000	-		
Gardener			1	1000	
Total for village (i.e. total individuals with jobs and total aggregated income)	51	66 800 R	33	76 100 R	Much fewer persons employed, average income decreased if adjusted for inflation
Averaged by number of households	0,59	768 R	0,33	769 R	Income/household same (=decreased), jobs/household decreased.









# ‘That Child Support Grant Gives Me Powers’ – Exploring Social and Relational Aspects of Cash Transfers in South Africa in Times of Livelihood Change

STEFAN GRANLUND\* & TESSA HOCHFELD\*\*

\*Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden, \*\*Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

*(Original version submitted May 2018; final version accepted July 2019)*

**ABSTRACT** *This article builds on existing literature on the material effects of cash transfers. It explores people’s own perceptions of the role of unconditional cash transfers in building, maintaining, and transforming social relations in a small village in rural South Africa. Much of the literature studying the impacts of cash transfers in the global South relies on quantitative measures. Thus, there is a paucity of micro-level qualitative research on beneficiaries’ own perspectives on the social impacts of cash transfers. To this end, we explored whether the Child Support Grant, a small cash transfer given to impoverished caregivers of children, changed individual and intra-household relationships, as well as community solidarity in this village. We argue that South Africa’s cash transfers have largely had positive social transformative effects on individuals, in relation to a sense of dignity, autonomy and increased decision-making powers for primary caregivers, usually mothers or grandmothers. Positive effects were also perceived in relation to these households and communities, although some contested effects and limitations were also found. These findings are of interest in the ongoing broader debates around the effects of cash transfers globally as well as regionally in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

## 1. Introduction

In a context of low levels of formal employment, a relatively small informal sector and declining household agricultural production in rural South Africa, the importance of cash transfers distributed by the state, known as social grants, has greatly expanded. Seventeen million individuals received social grants in 2017. Of these, 12 million received the Child Support Grant (CSG), a modest monthly amount (in 2018 ZAR400/USD33 per child), targeting the primary caregiver of children under 18 years who qualify through a means test.<sup>1</sup> The CSG targets the ‘primary caregiver’ instead of the child’s mother, as in South Africa many children are raised away from their biological parents, due to expansive kinship structures, the detrimental effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on households, and the legacy of economic migration. Nevertheless, the majority of primary caregivers who apply for the CSG are biological mothers (Budlender & Lund, 2011).

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*Correspondence Address:* Stefan Granlund, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Ulls väg 28 A, Uppsala 756 51, Sweden. Email: [stefan.granlund@slu.se](mailto:stefan.granlund@slu.se)

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Research has shown significant value that the CSG has for poor households, particularly in relation to improved nutrition and food security (Agüero, Carter, & Woolard, 2006; DSD, SASSA, & UNICEF, 2012), and positive educational effects (DSD, SASSA, & UNICEF, 2011, 2012). Recent qualitative cross-country studies performed elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa also show positive livelihood effects of cash transfers (Fisher et al., 2017). However, concerns have also been raised about the ability of cash transfers, currently undergoing a global boom as tool for poverty reduction across the world, to bring about more lasting and positive changes in ways that can be seen as ‘transformative’ (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Molyneux, Jones, & Samuels, 2016). The CSG was primarily intended to supplement income for the purpose of improving children’s food security, which it is achieving (DSD, SASSA, & UNICEF, 2012). However, there has been growing interest in social changes occurring due to the CSG, such as in gender relations and ‘women’s empowerment’ (Patel, Knijn, & van Wel, 2015), and care practices (Patel, Hochfeld, Moodley, & Mutwali, 2012). Nevertheless, there are gaps in the literature on beneficiaries’ own perspectives on the livelihood impacts of cash transfers (Fisher et al., 2017), including how social dynamics shape these impacts (cf. Harman, 2006).

The notion of ‘transformative social protection’ is a broad concept and has been applied variously in the literature.<sup>2</sup> Molyneux et al. (2016, p. 1088) suggest that the term refers to interventions that ‘aim to enhance the potential of poor people to move out of poverty’, rather than simply having ‘palliative’ effects that lack positive change dynamics, that is ameliorate the hardships of the poor without actually changing their status as poor. A cash transfer alone does not alter the economic and political roots of poverty which are largely structurally determined. However, access to a social grant could be merely ameliorative in terms of the structural conditions of poverty, and yet also elicit changes at the individual level that could have socially transformative effects, such as widely reported empowerment effects of cash transfers in a number of different contexts (Bastagli et al., 2016). This article speaks to such micro-level subjective transformations rather than broader transformations of poverty status, in which evidence of substantial and enduring change require longitudinal data (Molyneux et al., 2016).

In this research, we ask *what perceived role the CSG plays in the changing social relations in households and communities in a small rural village of South Africa, as a means to assess the degree to which it has potential transformative social/relational implications for recipients*. In particular, we asked about experiences of effects of the CSG on three different levels: Individual (for example, feelings of dignity, worry and stress, dependence/independence); intra-household (gender and inter-generational relations); and community (for example, distributive claims, solidarity and reciprocity).

This is a qualitative study drawing from 33 in-depth interviews exploring the lived experiences of rural CSG primary caregiver recipients and their perceptions as a result of these experiences.<sup>3</sup> We assessed the social effects of the CSG, although the term ‘effects’ is understood as how the participants themselves perceive the CSG as influencing social relations, rather than denoting causal relations.

In this article, we argue that the CSG has had individual-level impacts in the form of micro-level transformations, by expanding women’s autonomy, choices, dignity and social recognition, and at an intra-household level by its equalising tendencies in gender relations. In addition, the CSG has reduced recipients’ unequal or unfavourable relations of dependence on others in the community.

The next section describes the changing livelihoods context in South Africa and the role of distributive politics, followed by a review of selected literature on the potential transformative effects of cash transfers on three different levels. An empirical section describes the study area and presents and analyses the effects of the CSG. A final section contains a discussion and conclusions.

## **2. Distributive politics and social transformation in times of livelihood change**

In light of the fact that 37 per cent (StatsSA, 2017) of South Africa’s working-age population are unemployed with slim chances of acquiring waged work in the near future, Ferguson (2015) points to

the increasing importance of 'being granted distributive allocations from other individuals, institutions, or both' through social claims on individuals, households and communities, or claims on the state (Ferguson, 2015, p. 22). The most prominent of these formal distributive claims are social grants, state cash transfers paid to 12.1 million children (0–18 years) through their primary caregivers, 3.3 million old age pensioners above the age of 60 and 1.1 million people living with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> These direct distributive claims to publically funded resources is how large proportions of the South African population survive by means other than wage labour (market exchange) or agriculture.

Recent decades have seen largely jobless growth in South Africa, with a marked decline in wage labour. According to Seekings and Natrass (2005), mass unemployment existed already from the 1970s into post-apartheid South Africa, in conjunction with economic growth (Ferguson, 2015). There is no longer a need for large reserves of low-skilled workers to serve primarily the mining industry, which was one of the enabling factors of the apartheid economy, as jobs in mining have steadily declined since then. As Du Toit and Neves (2007, p. iv) put it, South Africa has long experienced 'simultaneously monetization, de-agrarianisation and de-industrialization'. The post-apartheid state has had to deal with deterioration of agrarian livelihoods in rural areas with extreme and rising levels of unemployment (Ferguson, 2015). Thus, Ferguson points to an emerging politics:

... it is unmistakably the case that (for the present and foreseeable near future, and across much of the world) people lacking access both to land and to waged employment form an increasingly prominent part of our social and political reality. Equally important, those occupying such precarious and ill-defined social locations are both pioneering new modes of livelihood and making new kinds of political demands. It is in this context that distributive practices and distributive politics are acquiring a new centrality ... Many of the key political and economic dynamics in the region today, I will suggest, turn on distributional claims, including claims made on the state (Ferguson, 2015, p. 23, 47)

While the politics of distribution is gaining more and more interest as an analytical field (Murray Li, 2017), the importance of social grants for livelihoods in South Africa is well established (Du Toit & Neves, 2014; Marais, 2011; Meth, 2004; Neves & Du Toit, 2013; Seekings, 2002; Seekings & Natrass, 2005). Social grants have also been criticised, for example, that South Africa's social welfare system is simply a tokenistic gesture towards the poor, failing to redress poverty and inequality, while the capitalist system remains intact (Bond, 2014; Khan, 2013; Pons-Vignon & Segatti, 2013). While that criticism deals with transformation (or lack of) on the structural level of economic inequalities and political power disparities, the scope of this article is on potential social transformation on an individual level.<sup>5</sup>

### *2.1. Transformative effects at individual level*

Much of the literature on cash transfers describes their material benefits. Cash transfers may also have positive social/relational transformative effects for recipients. Increased economic security and financial independence can lead to greater control over one's life (Bonilla et al., 2017; Molyneux et al., 2016). The individual's own personal experiences of changes brought about through cash transfers have been termed 'micro level subjective transformations' (Molyneux et al., 2016, p. 1090). Studies elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa show some positive effects regarding feelings of dignity and increased participation in social life, and also some positive, although limited, effects on general 'psychosocial' health and wellbeing (Attah et al., 2016; Samuels & Stavropoulou, 2016), all contributing to increased social 'recognition' (Fraser, 2000; Ulriksen, Plagerson, & Hochfeld, 2016). 'Recognition' here means participation as a full partner in social life and perceived by society as worthy of respect (Fraser, 2000).

There could also be negative social implications for individuals receiving a grant. A common criticism in South Africa is the notion that grants promote dependency on the state (Devereux, 2011; Surender, Noble, Wright, & Ntshongwana, 2010). Opposition to social protection is often based on conservative claims that dependency on cash transfers leads to a range of social ills, such as erosion of a work ethic, promotion of laziness, misuse of the money on, for example, alcohol or drugs, or perverse incentives such as increased fertility rates, despite a substantial body of research in South Africa and globally refuting these claims (Davis et al., 2016; Devereux, 2011; Fraser & Gordon, 1994). Cash transfers are regularly referred to as ‘handouts’ by politicians and state representatives (Surender et al., 2010), an attitude also fuelled by the media (Wright, Neves, Ntshongwana, & Noble, 2015) which can lead to stigma for CSG recipients (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011). Progressive critics (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Meth, 2004) point out that the poor are always dependent, on family and others, and workers dependent on their employer. Thus cash transfers are, instead, a way to ‘enable less malevolent sorts of dependence to take root and a circuit of reciprocities to unfold within which one-sided relations of dependence can become more egalitarian forms of interdependence’ (Ferguson, 2015, p. 138).

In this article, we engage with notions of dependence and independence at the level of individual and social relations, and explore possible improvements to individuals’ sense of wellbeing and dignity.

## *2.2. Transformative effects at intra-household level*

The literature is somewhat divided on the transformative effects of cash transfers on intra-household relationships, for example, as regards transformative change in gender relations (Bonilla et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2017). Research in South Africa shows positive outcomes for women’s financial independence and decision-making power due to access to the CSG (Patel et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2015). This may function through expanding the choices available to women in impoverished areas (Liebenberg, 2007). Gaining access to an independent income, in this case, the CSG, offers the potential to challenge a subordinate role with less economic and social power within the family and community, and therefore potentially rebalance unequal power relations (Bank, 2011; Dubbeld, 2017; Patel et al., 2015).

However, the CSG may also have more ambiguous effects on gender relations. For example, it has been argued that ‘reversed dependencies’ now exist in rural South Africa where men rely on women’s income through the CSG or a relative’s income through an old age pension, due to the massive decline in wage labour in male-dominated fields such as mining (Bähre, 2011; Ferguson, 2015). Male identities remain powerfully intertwined with labour as an expected norm in South Africa, which could potentially lead to feelings of shame of not fulfilling one’s role (Barchiesi, 2011; Ferguson, 2015). Bank’s (2011, p. 186) example of grant-receiving women jokingly referring to ‘the government as their new husband’ does indicate a new set of social dynamics. Hence, an important aspect of the new politics of distribution is the reversed dependencies and the central distributive role that women and the elderly now play.

Small amounts of cash sustains far more people in the household indirectly through income pooling (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). Distributive claims are therefore directed not only towards the state but also towards the recipients themselves as a source of income, since accessing resources as a dependent is a very common and important livelihood strategy among South Africa’s poor (Du Toit & Neves, 2014). For impoverished and marginalised young people with little education and facing a shrinking labour market, staying and/or moving to a household which has social grants (for example, a grandparent with a pension) is a favourable option and/or a necessity for many (Bähre, 2011). Literature on the effects of the old age pension shows that pensioners enjoy higher status and a stronger position in household as a result of that stable income (Moller & Sotshongaye, 1996).

Therefore, gaining access directly or indirectly to state cash transfers is, according to Du Toit and Neves (2014), probably the single most important component in the ‘arts of survival’ among those living at the margins of formal economy in South Africa. Social grants have a substantial impact on social dynamics across poor households (Bähre, 2011). The most destitute households are often those with no eligibility for state distribution of grants (no children under 18, no adults over 60) and few social networks of distribution (Ferguson, 2015).

### 2.3. Transformative effects at community level

Elsewhere, cash transfers have helped impoverished people engage in relations of reciprocity in the community, for example, by participating in traditional and family ceremonies through enabling purchases of gifts and thereby becoming more active participants in their communities (Molyneux et al., 2016; Pavanello et al., 2016). Increased reciprocity leads to stronger social ties through increased participation in social life and increased community informal sharing arrangements around in-kind support, primarily food (Pellerano et al., 2016). In addition, cash transfers can boost participation in rotating savings associations (*stokvels*) in South Africa. In addition to mutual financial assistance, *stokvels* also build a spirit of togetherness and co-operation by creating social networks (Patel, 2015).

However, heavily targeted cash transfer programmes with unclear or arbitrary eligibility criteria run the risk of having unintended negative effects on community level, due to creating stigma or jealousy among people who do not qualify (MacAuslan & Riemenschneider, 2011; Pavanello, Watson, Onyango-Ouma, & Bukuluki, 2016). However, there is only limited evidence of negative effects of targeting in South Africa due to the ‘universalistic’ categorical targeting of primary caregivers of children, and pensioners over the age of 60, using a generous means test (Ellis, 2012). Tensions can arise, however, when the CSG is perceived by the traditional elderly as a direct result of a rights-based system, at odds with ‘tradition’ and culture and as damaging the social fabric in the community (Dubbeld, 2013).

### 3. Potential micro-level transformative effects of the Child Support Grant in rural South Africa

This article is part of a larger project exploring the potential of cash transfers to produce long-term livelihoods effects in poor rural areas. From a database of household survey data from 2016, we purposively selected households for in-depth interviews. We chose households receiving a range of CSGs (from one to seven), and selected for a mix of different primary caregiver ages, ranging from 19 to 60 years old. The 33 semi-structured interviews were held with CSG primary caregiver recipients in 2017–2018, together with observations and informal conversations in the village. All the interviewees were women, reflecting the strongly gendered nature of care in South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

The data collection took place in Cutwini, a village in the Eastern Cape (Figure 1). Rural areas of Eastern Cape are some of poorest regions in South Africa, due to the legacy of apartheid with relatively poor quality of education and poor service delivery (Shackleton & Luckert, 2015). Cutwini, now electrified, has spacious grazing and agricultural lands, although due to the marked deagrarianisation across rural South Africa (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017), agricultural activity is low. The

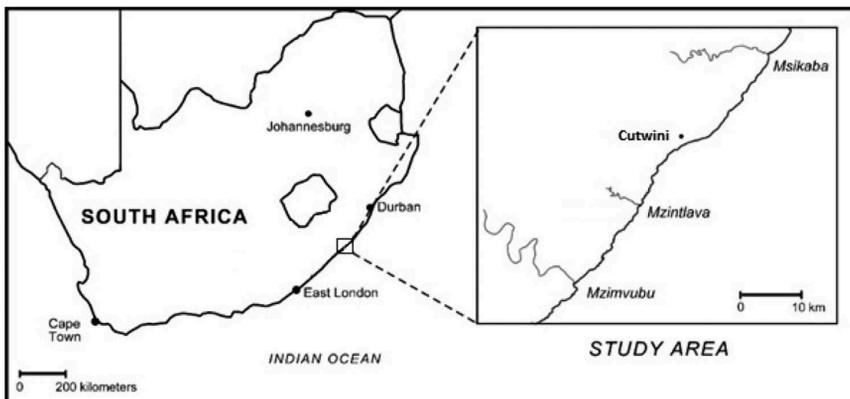


Figure 1. Map of South Africa showing the village Cutwini.

closest hub of supermarkets and stores is the small town of Lusikisiki, 26 km away which is about an hour's drive due to poor road conditions. Minibus taxis commute at least twice a day, but there is no other form of public transport. Residents in Cutwini are largely unemployed, but around half of all households receive *some* form of income from jobs, both formal and informal, including public works programmes and casual work like selling traditional beer, fruit or clothes and monetary remittances from relatives living elsewhere. Based on 2016 household survey data, 85 per cent of all 174 households in Cutwini received at least some form of state cash transfer monthly and by far the most prominent is the CSG, which the villagers first started receiving in 2002.

Drawing on the literature on distributive politics and transformative effects of cash transfers, we explored different social/relational effects of the CSG in Cutwini at three different levels (individual, intra-household, community). The aim was to gain a broader understanding of the role social grants play in rural South Africa. However, the distinction between the different levels was not clear-cut, reflecting the different roles of the CSG on multiple levels.

#### 4. Individual-level experiences

On the individual level, three prominent themes emerged. First, we found increased feelings of dignity and improved status in the household related to access of the grant and the ability to make decisions. Second, there was reduced worry and stress due to improved financial security and planning; having money to spend allowed people to worry less about food security and also improved their ability to plan ahead and save money. Third, we found feelings of 'independence', with access to CSG leading to greater personal autonomy or independence for the primary caregiver, replacing a previous dependence on family members or relatives.

##### 4.1. Increased feelings of dignity and improved status in household

Although the CSG is small in monetary value compared with the old age pension, most participants expressed feelings of increased dignity due to the CSG. Dignity, or *isidima* in isiXhosa (the local language), is in this context similar to being respected. Thembeke, in her 50s, has three children. She described how the CSG is linked to *isidima* and how it helps her manage her household:

*For me, the grant plays the role of the father, [because the real father of my children] is not employed, it also plays a role of [parents because I] do not have parents who could help me ... It also plays a role because I am not employed, you cannot see that I am not employed since I plan everything for this household with the grant.*

For Thembeke, the grant substitutes for social relations of kinship obligations, which speaks to similar reports on the old age pension in the Eastern Cape being likened to 'the son of the homestead' (Mtero, 2014, p. 202), the source of her livelihood. Thembeke's parents have passed away and, due to the lack of jobs, her husband is unable to fulfil the breadwinner role in the household. Thus, the CSG assumes that role in the household, a reminder of the 'reversed dependencies' taking place in many parts of rural South Africa (Bähre, 2011; Ferguson, 2015, p. 104). When asked what the CSG contributes to in her life, Thembeke did not answer immediately, she first smiled and waved her arm around, pointing at her house and then to herself: *'If there was no grant, you would have found me in very dirty form. I am clean because of this grant'*. This speaks to the 'micro-level subjective transformations' of, for instance, increased sense of dignity and wellbeing that comes from having some economic security in times of income insecurity (Molyneux et al., 2016).

Other participants also spoke of dignity, not just in an individual sense, but the dignity which comes from the CSG enabling solidarity and reciprocity within the household and the community

(discussed below). For instance, Fundiswa, a 40-year-old woman with two children, described how the grant gives her ‘powers’ and the importance of being able to share:

**Fundiswa:** *Most people respect me as I have this child grant. They will come to borrow money, they will come to ask for food. The food I bought with the money. So that child support grant gives me powers. So people respect me.*

**Interviewer:** *You said it gives you powers? Can you give an example of that?*

**Fundiswa:** *Like, (Stefan), I got this 400 Rand for my child grant. So if someone comes to ask me for some airtime, obviously I will give her. And I know this person gives me power. You know, now I am a person because someone say something to me, they want my help [with emphasis]. So obviously when you get that child grant, someone somewhere will respect you. Maybe you don't have food in your house so you come to me and borrow some money and I will give it to you so that you can buy a packet of mealie meal [the staple food].*

The feeling of ‘power’ and dignity that Fundiswa attributes to the CSG comes from a sense of recognition of her as a ‘person’ in the community, who can help in times of need, someone worthy of respect, which for Fundiswa is a source of wellbeing. This resonates as well with the Africanist and anthropological literature on wealth-in-people (wealth as a relational value, Rakopoulos & Rio, 2018). Fundiswa, in this case through being needed by others, acquires power and status through expanded social ties and relationships, itself a resource and another source of wealth. Sindisiwe, 37 years old, also referred to the links between sharing and dignity (*isidima*):

*There is isidima since I am able to help other people and I am not looked down upon, just because I receive the grant. A person is able to come and ask for something from me and I then give that thing to that person, then I am viewed as someone who has isidima since I am able to help other people.*

For Sindisiwe, being a grant recipient and a source of distribution does not entail feelings of stigma and shame (being looked down upon), but rather she acquires a sense of respect and dignity (*isidima*) from it. In this sense, being a source of distribution also affects your personhood. Similarly, Khanyiswa, a 20-year-old mother living with her parents, described the feeling of being able to contribute to the communal needs of the household and how it has changed her:

*I can say this thing of receiving the grant makes me a mature person ..., since I am able to do things that are done by mature people. I mean for instance [now I can] buy clothes for my child, I am able to buy things that are needed in this household ... it [gives me] dignity to act as a mature person.*

In her case, having the CSG acts as marker of entering adulthood. She is able to help out in household in a new way and the CSG gives her power to undertake things she could not do before. Therefore, similarly to Fundiswa and Sindisiwe, the CSG enables Khanyiswa to acquire a sense of recognition in the household and the community as a peer (Fraser, 2000). Khanyiswa’s sentiments regarding maturity/adulthood may stand in contrast to the growing literature around youth in Africa not being able to reach adulthood and being left in form of ‘waitthood’ (Honwana, 2012). ‘Waitthood’ and ‘adulthood’ can also exist uncomfortably together, as illustrated by Nombeko. She is only 22 years old, head of the household and lives with her sister and children. She is looking for work but can’t find any: *‘I feel stressed because as it is now I don't know what I will do with myself, I mean my future, I don't know the stage at which I am ... I'm not working, I'm not doing anything, I'm just at home, I can say I feel worried about my future’.*

Nombeko’s stress around her future shows the complexity around adulthood. Her CSGs enable her to live independently, exert autonomy, and look after the children. The stress and worry she experiences is around

her distant future, not more immediate household security. She is both ‘adult’ and a young person ‘waiting’, both able to fulfil her very adult responsibilities, but seeing little opportunities for her personal future.

#### 4.2. Reduced worry and stress due to financial security and planning

Livelihood security is achieved through a number of strategies and activities, but in Cutwini social grants are a key feature of improved financial security. In contrast to Nombeko (above), many participants described how the CSG helps them plan ahead and make strategic livelihood choices. Almost all mentioned the marked reduced worry and stress of not knowing whether there would be food in the household. The CSG was described as the key factor reducing stress.

Ndiliswa, 40 years old, said that *‘the Child Support Grant helps me dream good ... you manage to do the things you couldn’t do before. The things you plan to do, one, two, three. So therefore, sometimes dreams come true’*. This is consistent with claims in the literature that cash transfers have the potential to lead to increased financial empowerment for women, as they are able to control spending of the cash, such as for savings or household investments (Bonilla et al., 2017), and consequently attain more control over their lives (Molyneux et al., 2016).

As the CSG and the old age pension are regular and predictable incomes every month, the monthly ‘payday’ as it is called becomes a central part of the rural village economy. It is a day of joy and has a festive atmosphere with the villagers often using the phrase ‘Christmas day once a month’. It is the day when most economic activity takes place in the village. People gather for the local market that takes place only on payday, to borrow money, pay back loans, pay funeral insurance and pay savings associations. Contrary to reports on predatory practices surrounding payments of social grants (Vally, 2016), in this village at the time of fieldwork (2016–2018) deductions from their grant prior to payment were not seen as a big problem according to these participants.

#### 4.3. Issues regarding ‘dependence’ and ‘independence’

A striking feature in the interviews was that, in opposition to common public discourses that the CSG leads to dependency (as described in Devereux, 2011; Meth, 2004), most beneficiaries described feelings of increased *independence*. They did not express concerns around dependence on the state, rather, they saw the grant as relieving unwanted dependence on family or community. Lulama, 43 years old, who used to rely on her mother- and father-in-law for money to buy food for the household, can see a clear change in her life: *‘I am now not dependent, I am independent’* [said with emphasis]. For Lulama, this means not being forced into unfavourable relations of dependence, and hence subservience. Being a CSG recipient entails being less dependent on other family members or neighbours to survive. Thenjiwe, in her late 40s, reported similar experiences. She lives with her grandchildren and stressed the importance of the three CSGs she receives. When asked to reflect on life before the CSG, she said: *‘It was not pleasant. I didn’t have hope for any money, there was no one to give me money. At least now each and every month, I know what to expect’*. Even though she still sometimes asks her family or neighbours for support, she says, *‘there is a difference, even if I ask, I don’t do it the way I used to do it before’*. This implies a shift towards greater bargaining power for Thenjiwe, as she knows she has a secure and stable income every month and is not in a state of desperation.

The CSG is de facto a women’s grant, and often the only source of income for many women in the village. Thembeke also clearly stated how the CSG strengthens her decision-making power and autonomy: *‘I see myself as being important because I don’t depend on a person. I have a date on which I go to receive my children’s money and do what I want to do with it’*. The importance of being able to care for yourself in general was seen as important as Thabisa, in her 20s, said when asked about the importance of the CSG in not being forced to ask food from others, *‘when you appear, people disappear’*.

The notion of ‘independence’ must here be thought of as a matter of degree. No-one is completely ‘independent’ in Cutwini and the grant does not make recipients fully independent in other areas of their

livelihoods, but it contributes to a sense of autonomy that is highly valued. Study participants claimed they prefer to be dependent on government, as it does not lead to unequal power relations between family members or relatives. This is in contrast to some assertions in Ferguson (2013) around the important social belonging that comes from being dependent on someone. The CSG offered Lulama increased autonomy from her parents-in-law, to which she aspired. We can see this as *inter-dependence* (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Meth, 2004), as previous more one-sided relations of income dependence has been transformed into more egalitarian forms of inter-dependence. The grant therefore contributes to a decrease in unequal power relations (Ferguson, 2015). However, while CSG caregivers may exert a form of power through the income they possess, they are still overwhelmingly responsible for unpaid care work/household labour which is generally unrecognised and thus a form of continued inequality (Fraser & Gordon, 1994).

## 5. Intrahousehold-level relationships

The women interviewed perceived changes in gender relations, specifically decision-making power, bargaining power and higher status due to the CSG. However, they also reported their husbands' or partners' increased feelings of shame on losing their identity as the male breadwinner and in some cases on the CSG being used as an excuse not to provide parental monetary support. As regards inter-generational relations, the CSG was appreciated for relieving pressure on pensioners' incomes in the household, but some elderly also viewed it as reinforcing a longer trend of young people deserting agriculture.

### 5.1. Changing gender relations

Interlinked to feelings of increased 'independence', the women perceived changes in gender relations in the village, especially in the household. Many participants mentioned that women have higher status in the village since the introduction of the grant, since (together with pensioners) they now have a secure, regular income that contributes to the entire household. The participants often mentioned men asking for small sums of money, such as for transport or airtime for mobile phones. Lulama described her agency in dealing with claims on her as a distributional resource by her husband. *'He has the right to ask me for some of the money, if he asks me nicely. And I can say no, sometimes yes, sometimes no'*.

The ability to both provide and withhold money is rather new for the participants and provides them with enhanced bargaining and decision-making powers. The views offered hereby Lulama and Fundiswa corroborate quantitative research of CSG recipients of, for example, increased financial independence and decision-making power for women (Patel et al., 2015).

However, the CSG can potentially also be a source of tension in the household as Nandipha, 45 years old, elaborates:

*The men don't see the way we see it ... no, men see it as if you are superior when there is money you receive just for free ... If a woman receives money that she did not work for since we get it from government, to a man it can play a role of creating conflict.*

Nevertheless, conversations in the village over time indicated that partners and other household members broadly agree that the CSG money is being spent responsibly and that it also benefits men as members of the household. Instead of conflict, the women tended to remark on men's loss of identity as a breadwinner, leading to feelings of shame. Sindisiwe commented:

*I can say that [my husband] is not happy, since he is not working, he is telling himself he is making a living out of these children's money ... Sometimes I see [his] shame, and he is suffering because he is not bringing anything since he is not employed. He does appreciate it but he keeps beating himself up since he is not doing anything which gives him money.*

These comments reveal the complexities of the 'reversed dependencies' and changes in social and economic power in the region (Bähre, 2011; Reed, 2016).

Some women reported that fathers of beneficiary children can use the grant as an excuse not to provide monetary support for their biological children who live in other households. This was especially true in the case of younger unmarried couples, as Thabisa, argues: '*The men are happy because even if a person does not pay maintenance for the child, they know you will get paid*'. Absentee fathers are very common in South Africa (Patel & Mavungu, 2016), and Cutwini is no exception.

### 5.2. Inter-generational relations

The old age pension/older persons grant (in 2018 ZAR1690/USD122 per month) has long been a stable and reliable source of livelihood for many people in rural South Africa. It is also a household income benefiting more household members than just the pensioner (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). Therefore, the introduction of the CSG has relieved pressure on pensioners' income in sustaining other household members (Bähre, 2011). Most participants claimed that the elderly appreciate the CSG greatly because, as one participant described it, '*having to ask people all the time is annoying to others*', as well demeaning to oneself. And similar to Dubbeld (2017), for younger women, it also means less dependence on the older generation and a corresponding increase in autonomy.

While intergenerational friction due to the CSG was not pronounced in Cutwini some tension emerged with regards to farming as a source of livelihood. The elderly lamented that fields have been largely abandoned in favour of small vegetable gardens. Some partly blamed this development on the CSG, which is perceived as 'easy money', and others blamed young people in general for being 'lazier'. Nobantu, a grandmother of 73, described a commonly held view among the elderly in the village:

*It's tough now, but this government grant helps us a lot, otherwise we would have died since crop farming was stopped, young people do not want to work, we old people know it since we used to eat mealies [the staple food—maize porridge/pap], we used to crush it [ourselves by hand].*

However, the reasons for deagrarianisation in these areas are more complex than 'lazy young people'. There is no simple causative link between grant payments and deagrarianisation, and this trend started long before the introduction of the CSG (de la Hey & Beinart, 2017).

These sentiments echo discourses noted in other literature, such as negative societal stereotypes of unemployed youth being 'lazy' (Jeske, 2018), and 'nostalgia' for a more stable past (Reed, 2016) when unemployment and decreasing marriage rates wasn't so pronounced. Discussions in the village among a few of the elderly suggested that new democratic rights post 1994, such as discourses of 'children's rights', undermined the 'old' social order, but there were few concerns that the CSG diluted 'culture', in contrast to Dubbeld's (2013) findings from Kwazulu-Natal.

## 6. Community-level relationships

At the community level, the grant facilitates and reproduces solidarity and reciprocity through its regularity and predictability, and is an enabler of primarily women coming together in informal savings associations. For grant recipients, being a *source* of income also entails navigating between different forms of claims on them and can be both a source of strengthened social relationships and sometimes a strain on household income (Du Toit & Neves, 2014).

### 6.1. Claims on grant recipients as a source of income

As already described in several quotes, recipients of the CSG have to deal with claims on them as a source of income, which is not necessarily seen as a bad thing as it can reinforce social ties and

reciprocal relationships leading to status and power.<sup>7</sup> As the CSG is often pooled in the household, meaning it doesn't only benefit the child but benefits the entire household, the injection of state money into the community also enables other actors to claim part of the income. There are many different demands on that money during the month. One of the oldest participants interviewed mentioned how she paid her local church at least ZAR100/USD7 per month in donations and sometimes even up to ZAR200/USD14, which is a significant amount of her total household income. During the field study, a village meeting with the sub-headman decided that every household should contribute ZAR50/USD3.50 in order to present the new king in the region with the gift of a cow. The CSG and the old age pension 'indubitably provides uncommon cash liquidity in rural areas' (Neves & Du Toit, 2013, p. 107). While these payments are important for upholding or strengthening social relations, it must also be pointed out that the CSG is actually very small in value and that households with no other income from jobs or an old age pension spend most of it on food, and sometimes struggle when asked for money. As Thembeke said: *'I will not give [cash] even if they ask, it is already finished by the time I return from town'*.

## 6.2. Community-level solidarity and reciprocity

Many of the participants expressed just how important the grants are in enabling them to share and help others. Lulama used the African philosophy of *ubuntu*<sup>8</sup> as justification: *'Alright, you know (Stefan), because umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (a person is a person because of other people). So if a person has no-one, even in these communities if they have no salt, no cooking oil or what what, they must come into my home or even me I must go to my neighbour ... I take this one in my cupboard and collect this one and this one to take to go and cook for their children ... So ja, we support people'*.

Ndiliswa underlined the importance of solidarity in this community, and how it functions as an informal social safety net in times of crisis with an understanding of a reciprocal relationship: *'When a person asks for help I need to help them, not as an obligation but once a person comes to ask from you, you need to help them. Isn't it you will also need assistance?'* Thenjiwe said *'we help one another when we see that there is still someone who is in trouble'*.

The CSG does not create this sense of solidarity and reciprocity, but acts as an important *facilitator* of it in times of livelihood change, and in times of stress and shocks to the household. However, there are limits to reciprocity and sharing. The examples cited here should be seen in light of someone struggling occasionally rather than everyday sharing with other households. Indeed, informal social protection is frequently uneven and claims on resources and solidarity often an outcome of contestation, negotiation and power relations (Neves & Du Toit, 2013). Fundiswa says when it comes to borrowing and lending *'no one would lend you money if you don't have a grant'* and attaining credit at the local shop (*spaza* credit) is difficult without the possession of an old age pension. In these instances, it is often the men who are left out of the reciprocity and solidarity. Nevertheless, the social grants do serve as an important component in the circuits of mutual assistance and reciprocity upon which many impoverished rural South Africans eke out a living (Neves & Du Toit, 2013).

The CSG also enables recipients to engage in *stokvels*, well-known South African rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS). They often entail saving a monthly sum together with several households (around 10 people) and buying in bulk or acquiring assets, such as buying a water tank or fridge. During the fieldwork there were around five active *stokvels* in Cutwini. Several participants mentioned how important and helpful the *stokvels* are, for example, since non-perishable food bought at the end of the year can sometime last several months in a household. For many, the CSG is a precondition for engaging with a *stokvel*. Thembi said: *'If [CSG] was not there, I would not be able to pay, actually I would not have joined the stokvel, you see'*. Apart from the benefits of providing security during household shocks, *stokvels* may also create and/or help reproduce community solidarity and co-operation (Patel, 2015). The *stokvel* members (almost always women) in the village hold monthly meetings after payday to deposit savings and share information, and this is an enduring social network.

This section has illustrated that the CSG can help strengthen social relationships with neighbours and relatives in the community (Pavanello et al., 2016; Pellerano et al., 2016). The primary benefits of the grants come from the reliability and predictability it offers women and in so doing becomes a vehicle for coming together in savings groups. However, its low value does limit its community benefits, and its impact should not be overstated.

## **7. Discussion and concluding remarks**

We have in this article discussed rural women's perceptions of the social effects of the CSG. This research casts light on social dynamics in rural South Africa and we tentatively suggest these trends are towards social transformation on a micro-level. As an independent, unconditional source of income, the CSG has had individual-level impacts in the form of micro-level transformations, by expanding women's autonomy, choices, dignity and social recognition, and at an intra-household level by its equalising tendencies in gender relations. In addition, the CSG has reduced recipients' unequal or unfavourable relations of dependence on others in the community. It appears that the CSG has not affected the gendered division of labour (Patel & Hochfeld, 2011), and social reproductive labour is still overwhelmingly a woman's domain in Cutwini. Therefore, although we see noticeable shifts in gender relations, which are certainly influenced by the CSG, a cash transfer needs to work in tandem with other interventions in order to transform gender relations more substantively (Bonilla et al., 2017; Holmes & Jones, 2013).

At the community level, the CSG helps facilitate solidarity and reciprocity in Cutwini. By creating a new stream of distribution through the CSG beneficiaries, individual, household and community claims are both made and met. The grant also enables ROSCA to grow, which strengthens social networks among women. Increased solidarity within the village is positive change, although not socially transformative as ROSCA existed long before the CSG. Also, grants are important in circuits of mutual assistance but their effects shouldn't be romanticised as reciprocity and solidarity is never afforded perfectly equally to all and often are mediated by power relations.

When the CSG was first introduced, it was never intended to be 'structurally transformative' in terms of poverty eradication (Lund, 2008), and the actual sums are still very small. Neither was the CSG designed to transform gender relations (Lund, 2008). Social change is complex, and contradictions and inconsistencies are evident in this interview data. The different effects of the grant we explored here do not work in simple causative ways, are not always unidirectional, and cannot single-handedly 'move people out of poverty'. However, there is evidence of effects that could be socially transformative on a micro-level, with the potential to lead to positive social change over time. Indeed, in the face of jobless growth and ongoing deagrarianisation, the grants have opened up new possibilities, primarily for women and pensioners, to increase their status and position in households and communities in South Africa. Social grants are indeed key to survival in impoverished rural communities in South Africa and those who traditionally had less economic power, are today an important source of distribution. The role of the CSG in Cutwini is therefore, as Harman (2006) argues, not simply an economic transfer which keeps individuals in households and communities afloat, it also becomes part of, and reshapes, social relations. The social impacts of cash transfers are of great interest internationally as they have become ubiquitous as a poverty reduction strategy in the South. These findings, therefore, have potential to offer new insights beyond South Africa in order to deepen our knowledge of the role cash transfers are currently playing. Distribution and distributive politics (with all its current limitations) is a political reality not only in South Africa and warrants greater attention internationally (Murray Li, 2017). A politics of distribution (in which cash transfers play a major part), we contend, will in all likelihood play an even greater role in the future in times of absence of decent waged work for 'surplus' populations (Ferguson & Li, 2018; Murray Li, 2017) across many parts of the world.

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## Notes

1. To qualify for the CSG, an individual must earn less than ZAR48 000/USD3500 per year if single or ZARR96 000/USD7000 combined income if married.
2. See Devereux & McGregor (2014) for a broader definition including structural reforms such as anti-discrimination laws aimed at correcting social injustices.
3. Here we are using the term perceptions as has been methodologically described in Pozarny & Barrington (2016, p. 72).
4. Other smaller categories make up a further nearly 800,000 grants, totalling 17.3 million cash transfers paid every month (SASSA, 2017).
5. This article seeks to build on a special issue on transformative effects of cash transfers in *The Journal of Development Studies* Vol.52, issue 8 (2016).
6. All participants have been given pseudonyms. All granted oral and written consent to participate in interviews. The interviews were conducted by the first author, who lived in a local interpreter's household in Cutwini, for about 2 months at a time in 2016, 2017, and 2018. With the exception of four held in English, the interviews were conducted in isiXhosa and interpreted simultaneously by a local trained interpreter.
7. See Ferguson (2013) for more on wealth-in-people and status acquired through relations of dependence and Guyer (1997, p. 115) on how the goal with material wealth was seen as 'the transformation of goods into rights in people'.
8. Ubuntu is a communitarian philosophy which sees the individual embedded in broader relational ties to the family and surrounding society and emphasises values such as sharing, solidarity and reciprocity (Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013).

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# ACTA UNIVERSITATIS AGRICULTURAE SUECIAE

## DOCTORAL THESIS NO. 2020:10

This thesis explores the material as well as the socio-relational implications of the Child Support Grant (CSG), a state cash transfer, in rural South Africa. The results show that in times of declining employment and dwindling smallholder agricultural production, the CSG has both protective and (limited) productive effects on recipients' livelihoods. In a context of prevalent anti-welfare attitudes in South Africa, the study shows that the CSG has strengthened the autonomy and dignity of recipients as well as contributed to an increased sense of citizenship.

**Stefan Granlund** received his Master's degree in Human Rights at the department of Theology at Uppsala University, Sweden. He undertook his doctoral studies at the Division of Rural Development, Department of Urban and Rural Development at SLU.

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