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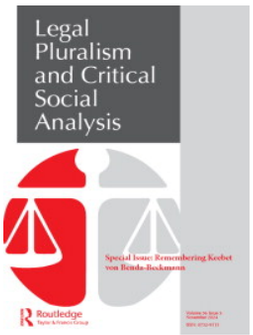
Vel, J.A.C.; Warren, C.



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The changing social security mix in rural Indonesia: between state welfare and moral economy

Jacqueline A. C. Vel[a] and Carol Warren[b]

[a]Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society (VVI), Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands; [b]Indo-Pacific Research Centre, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia

ABSTRACT

This article addresses the importance of understanding informal and customary arrangements to comprehend social security in the contemporary Indonesian context. Highlighting the work of K. von Benda-Beckmann, the focus is on how people foster circles of solidarity to deal with vulnerability, and needs for food, shelter and care, while creating their social security mixes, in which state provisions and community arrangements are combined. We argue that – since there is no welfare state capable of providing for all aspects of social security – people will depend on informal provisions that belong to the realm of moral economy. Based on both authors' field research, the article explains how this social security mix functions in practice, with examples from the Indonesian islands of Bali and Sumba. We explore to what extent such a moral economy persists, and how moral economy arrangements for mutual support differ from state welfare, in particular from normative and relational perspectives, and how people shape articulations between the two support systems. We argue, in line with the von Benda-Beckmann approach, that it is crucial to understand social security practices as a mixture resulting from Indonesia's economic and legal pluralism.

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Social security; moral economy; Indonesia; relational theory; legal pluralism

1. Introduction

Between 2015 and 2021 the authors of this article participated in a research project that aimed at analysing the nature and social consequences of economic development and agrarian change processes in rural Indonesia in relation to the scope and effectiveness of Indonesia's state social protection programs. The project team conducted field research with local co-researchers in rural areas across Indonesia that varied in agro-ecological production systems and socio-cultural characteristics. Our own research concentrated on remote coastal areas in west Bali and east Sumba.[1] Throughout the period of our field research for that social protection policy project, the communities we studied have been under considerable economic and environmental pressure. In Bali, the collapse of the Bali Strait fishery increased the vulnerability of the fisher

CONTACT Jacqueline A. C. Vel j.a.c.vel@law.leidenuniv.nl

communities who found limited alternatives in casual construction employment and work migration to centres of tourism in the southern part of the island. Climate change-related factors caused alternating periods of severe droughts and flooding in Sumba while in some parts of the island agricultural land, forests and sea on which resources the villagers in the coastal area used to rely are being enclosed by corporations from outside the island. Both factors have stimulated labour out-migration. We found the detailed quantitative household and nutritional surveys conducted for the project inadequate to assess the welfare situation of the villagers in our study. We concluded that informal and under-reported spheres of exchange and reciprocity underwriting subsistence through everyday coping strategies must also be taken into account, despite the difficulties of capturing them statistically (Vel and Makambombu, 2023, 161; Warren 2023, 234).

Not only our own case studies, but also the overall analysis of the research program's findings called for "a more inclusive approach to assistance in accord with reciprocal and redistributive practices that bind together the social fabric of village life" (McCarthy, McWilliam, and Nooteboom 2023, 418). An underlying problem with national social protection programs is that they are based on assumptions concerning the poor in rural areas of the country that cover only part of village reality. Government approaches targeting the poor are based on poverty measured quantitatively by income, material assets and food intake criteria, and take nuclear family households as the basic unit of rural society. By contrast, villagers in our study community also regard inability to participate in ceremonial events as a sign of poverty, and sharing with people beyond their immediate household was a significant aspect of caring for each other. Such notions raise questions about the extent of non-market provisioning alongside the need to go beyond boundaries of household and community obligation for understanding contemporary welfare systems. If indeed the assumptions of national social protection programs do not correspond with reality, we aim to contribute insights into the "logics of social life in rural Indonesia on which more effective social protection policy can build" (McWilliam et al. 2023,78).

In the conclusions of our chapters in the research project's end publication (McCarthy, McWilliam, and Nooteboom 2023)[2] we both mentioned the persistence of the "moral economy", a concept which remains of significance to critical debates in academic and policy-making circles. Critical scholars have warned against the unjustified romantic assumptions of communal harmony and equality implicit in the concept (Popkin 1979, Bowen 1986, Schrauwers 1999). However, in the context of the central questions of our research project, moral economy proved a useful sensitising concept to capture provisioning outside the market economy, and mutual exchange relations based on communality beyond the immediate interests of private individuals and households. Moreover, focus on moral economy stimulates analytical attention to the politics of state welfare distribution from the perspective of villagers themselves.[3] Our findings indicated that through a complex range of reciprocities in kinship, local exchange networks and patron-client arrangements, kin and village-based social relations do provide important welfare supports that are not encompassed by market measures. These networks and relations may also implicate debt, obligations, dependence and sometimes exploitation. What has to be explored is the extent to which such a moral economy persists, under what conditions people continue to obey its rules and accept

its obligations, and how its arrangements contribute to people's social security mixes. For example, in both our research areas, why do even those people who have low incomes invest so much time, money and food in ceremonial activities? Furthermore, how do notions associated with "traditional" moral economies at village level inform the villagers' concepts of appropriate redistribution in "modern" state welfare programs?

These questions arising from our project are in line with the research on social security that K. von Benda-Beckmann and F. von Benda-Beckmann have conducted throughout their careers. In the 1990s they introduced their "functional approach" in social security research as a complement to the institutional approach that was also the basis of the surveys in our research project mentioned above. The basic question for empirical study in von Benda-Beckmanns' early social security research was how people deal with the material and immaterial aspects of uncertainty and insecurity in problematic life situations. Theoretically, their research on social security was a way of studying legal pluralism – the main theme of their careers – with a central focus on "the co-existence, confrontation and interpenetration of different types of social security norms and practices" (F. von Benda-Beckmann et al. 1988, 9). The main purpose of this article is to show the relevance of von Benda-Beckmann's, and especially Keebet's, focus on the social security mix, which demonstrates the existence of often overlooked moral economy dimensions. Researching the social security mix in the contemporary period is important because of the conflicting pressures on its viability especially due to economic migration. Additionally, there is practical need for its recognition because the state has difficulty responding to the complexity of local needs in the face of an increasingly uncertain range of environmental changes caused by climate change, pandemics, overfishing, and animal diseases. The social and cultural aspects of care are important here, and least able to be dealt with directly from the great social distance of the state.

This article will continue with an elaboration of the concept of the "social security mix" as introduced by K. von Benda-Beckmann. The third section discusses non-state social security mechanisms as part of people's moral economy and includes case studies on non-monetary exchange practices in the form of sharing and long-term reciprocity in kinship-networks and community relations. Section four concentrates on how people in rural Indonesia access state social protection programs and discusses the importance of state provisions for poor households. The fifth section pays attention to care as a critical and fundamentally relational element of the social security mix. Section six depicts wider factors of social, economic and environmental change that influence the social security mix. These factors stimulate migration which in turn disturbs customary moral economy practices but also creates new circles of solidarity. Section seven highlights Keebet von Benda-Beckmann's recent work on relational theory that adds theoretical insights on the effect of stretching social security network relationships.

2. The social security mix

> Building [policies] upon local mechanisms of social security requires careful analysis of these mechanisms, the available resources and conditions under which they might fruitfully be employed for social security. It requires an understanding of the social security mixes people are familiar with (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2008, 136).

F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann (1994) explained their views on social security research most elaborately in the publication "Coping with Insecurity" which was the introduction to a collection of articles of PhD students and colleagues who had been conducting research in many parts of the world. Keebet and Franz developed their theoretical ideas after their own field research in Ambon in the 1980s. In 1994, they launched their "functional approach" referring to the social security function that social relations or institutions have in practice, which they considered as an open empirical question.[4] Their functional approach complemented while also contrasting with the narrowly institutional approach common in main stream social security research at the time, in which policy-oriented studies investigated how state social security schemes contributed to the objectives of national economic policy on poverty alleviation (see Midgley 1994).

Where the institutional approach would start with questions about levels of income and poverty in a certain geographical region, the von Benda-Beckmanns' functional approach starts from attention to the plurality of normative systems present among the research population. Each of these normative systems – state, customary, religious, project or company-law – has its corresponding social organisation and institutions (including rituals) that constitute the fabric of society. F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann (1994, 20) argued that there is always a plurality of social security relations and that "people have social security mixes which are based on a multiplicity of social relationships". For example, a person can rely on assistance of neighbours when repairing the roof of his house, receives care from children or parents when ill, and can rely on a donation of the church, temple or mosque and social assistance from the municipality when making ends meet is difficult because of unemployment. Investing in these relations is a major social security strategy, because helping others is a way of securing reciprocal care in the future. The precondition is that the necessary relationships with the security providers exist and are well-maintained. The quality of such relations depends also on the institutional[5] strengths that are the underpinnings of these security providers. The trust that leads the person to invest in maintaining good relations will be partly built from others' similar commitments to the organisational infrastructure that constitutes the cultural institutions of the communities that have been established and maintained over time. In choosing a functional mix, the individual contributes to the continuity or weakening of some mix components. What a person does and how he or she contributes to maintaining good relationships, how membership of (which) community is acquired and continued, which ceremonial events he or she attends or organises, and which material exchanges are involved are all questions about that person's social security mix. Some people lack the capabilities and resources for creating and maintaining their social security mix, which puts their ability to cope in times of illness, hunger periods or unemployment in danger. A decreasing or very limited social security mix differs from conventional concepts of poverty as measured in terms of annual income or food consumption, because it also pertains to other aspects of social security encompassed in the broad concept of "care", as a measure of well-being that goes beyond the material provision of basic physical needs.

Another main characteristic of the functional approach to social security is the attention to time. A person's feeling of (in)security depends on imagination of the future and experiences in the past. In practice, reciprocal relations of assistance and care have been created over the years. People remember, and sometimes keep accounts, of the contributions they have provided to the members in their social networks, specifying what they can hope for in return in the future on their own balance sheet. What they can expect concerning state provision of social security is also based on experiences with how social protection schemes have been implemented in the past. The long-term aspects[6] of the social security mix remain invisible if social security research is restricted to one point in time.

Methodologically, starting from the social relations of a certain group of people is an alternative to taking a geographical area as a research field. In the geographical approach to social protection research, a village is a unit of state administration and its inhabitants state citizens (or illegal inhabitants), grouped in neighbourhoods and households. By contrast, in the von Benda-Beckmanns' functional approach the social security relations cover a wider area than just one village, depending on where the starting group's security providers live. In this line of thought, Keebet conducted research on the links between Moluccan immigrants in the Netherlands with their relatives on the island of Ambon (K. von Benda-Beckmann 1991, 2008, 2023). That research concentrated on relations (and obligations) of care, showing that for each element of the social security mix there might be a distinct network for providing the services needed, and that these networks often go beyond fixed boundaries of household and village.

3. Moral economy

What are the characteristics of such social networks that provide mutual help, and on which social norms are they based? In writing about our recent food security research on Bali and Sumba we used "moral economy" in opposition to the market economy, as a sensitising concept, to draw attention to people's own, informal, non-state social security mechanisms. Moral economy is a complex container concept for which a single sentence definition that would cover all its aspects is not available (Carrier 2018). In political speeches, it has been used ideologically referring to a better world economic system[7] or to a people's economy that conforms to Islamic values (Mulyany and Furqani 2019).

Examples of moral economies which are described as "high relationship economies" (Gudeman 2016), or "House Economies" (De L'Estoile 2014, S62; Vel 1994) give attention to social networks of reciprocal exchange and mutual obligation that are integral to the making of material life. The substantivist approach in economic anthropology characterises moral economies by their ways of practicing reciprocity, redistribution and exchange (Sahlins 1974). As an analytical counterpoint to the market economy, the concept has a long pedigree in anthropology, sociology, and history. Summarising that tradition, "put roughly, the moral economy refers to the idea that societies traditionally defined their members' economic rights and constrained their legitimate economic actions on the grounds of a moral consensus" (Keane 2019, 3). This definition directs our attention to the assumptions implicit

in characterising a socially "embedded" economy (Polanyi 1944) which presupposes rights to subsistence, and involves different kinds of sharing in different contexts that emphasise principles of need and equivalence (Sahlins 1974). Taking this further requires consideration of wider questions about the tension between need and equity that is negotiated (and even institutionalised) in different local contexts over time.

3.1. Sharing fish in Bali

We can take an example from a fishing community in Bali to show how the complexities of the moral economy acquire shape. What would be perfectly normal for the fisherfolk involved is complex and alternative from the perspective of market economic behaviour. As *Homo economicus,* a commercial fisherman would catch fish, return to the shore and sell all the fish. He would use the money to buy what he needs and pay the boat rent and wages of his assistant fishers. By contrast, examples from Warren's research in a west Bali fishing community describes the range of practices surrounding the sharing of fish as entitlement, gift, and access to reciprocal exchange. These informal and uncalculated everyday distributions evaded our surveys and raised questions about the narrow focus on individuals and households, the limits of money and market transactions, and assumptions about the priority of private interests and rigid community boundaries.

In the Balinese fishing village of Perangkat[8] every day you can see people passing strings of fish and other small-scale forms of provisioning among neighbours and kin that were so taken for granted that they were not mentioned when we asked questions about income and expenditure in our household survey. Food security in this fishing community was underpinned by a range of practices encompassed by the concept "ngujur" which gave access to distributions of fish as gift or compensation for voluntary assistance among the traditional small-scale line fishers and even the crews on the commercial sardine fleet that moored in the river. In fact, the term has a formal dictionary definition as "asking for fish from fishers just returning from the sea" (Kamus Bali-Indonesia 1978). But in practice, the concept of "ngujur" extends to many forms of gifting and reciprocity that reflect local understandings of rights to subsistence. Observations and informal conversations over more than a decade of annual field visits, revealed the range of practices the term stretches to encompass. In Warren's host family, Pak Su, head of a local fishing cooperative, would typically reserve up to 3 kilos of fish from his day's catch for the needs of the four extended family "households" in his residential compound. He distributed an additional couple of kilos on days of a good catch to fellow members of the artisanal fishing group he coordinated. An elderly villager who no longer could go to sea, commented that he never had to buy fish but regularly joined in helping the returning artisanal fishers land their small outriggers on the beach, who in turn reciprocated with fish for his daily needs.

The label *ngujur* extended also to some practices in the large commercial sardine fishing fleet which was dominated by Muslim entrepreneurs from neighbouring villages. Strings of fish passed from the hands of crew outside the formally prescribed marketing arrangements at the nearby official fish-landing and auction site (TPI). A report into sustainability of the significant sardine fishery there referred to "as

much as twenty-five percent losses to the market at auction site due to unreported distributions of catch to those assisting – porters, scourers, ferrymen – as well as to people who gather around the vessels during unloading to clean the nets or take/steal fish" (ACIAR 2011, appendix 2.6). During a 2019 visit to the TPI Warren observed women standing waste deep with long net bags casually taking fish from the large open baskets porters carried from the purse seine fleet to the auction site, with little resistance from the carriers. This overt redistributive custom was clearly taken by boat owners, crew and the TPI administration as normal practice. The term *ngujur* also applied to the gleaning[9] of large amounts of undersized scrap fish caught in purse seine nets as a kind of non-market compensation for labour gathered to scour them. The concept ambiguously seems to cover gifts as well as in-kind exchange of labour for food, and extends to outright "taking" of fish as an act of entitlement in the local fishing culture that goes beyond village borders.

Gifts and appropriations of fish, distributions through labour exchange or as compensation for unsolicited assistance reflect practices that have the effect of redistributing, reciprocating and balancing out some of the social differences in life chances that inevitably create insecurity in households with marginal and erratic income sources. The account above describes kinds of sharing that conform to the principles of need and equity set out by Sahlins (1974) that characterise generalised and balanced types of reciprocity respectively. Degrees of subsistence orientation and social distance also influence the extent of these distributions. But extension of the concept of *ngujur* beyond personal relationships (as in the case of open appropriations by women gleaners at the TPI) that are normally associated with relatively bounded households and communities (Scott 1976) raises further questions about the extension of the "moral" dimensions of economic provisioning beyond conventional boundaries. The analytical challenge requires that we need to learn more about the social relations between giver and receiver and more widely about the social-relational dimensions of institutionalised practices (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2008, 136).

3.2. Societal institutions

A basic premise in the design of state social protection programs is that society consists of nuclear households in which the members share food, capital, care and shelter. In Indonesia, the households are part of the administrative structure of the village (*desa*), consisting of neighbourhoods (RT), sub-village wards or hamlets (*dusun* or *banjar dinas* in Bali). In that model there is no assumption about mutual assistance between households.[10] The *desa* has its territory, defined on the map by clear boundaries, and villagers are citizens living in a specific *desa* as the lowest administrative unit of the country. However, in practice that does not correspond with how villagers feel their identity. In Bali, the *banjar adat*, a neighbourhood community with customary social and ritual responsibilities, is more important as a unit of social organisation and belonging (and solidarity) than the administrative village units, *desa* and *banjar dinas* (Geertz 1959; Lansing 2006; Warren 1993). In Sumba, social organisation based on kinship in patrilineal clans *(kabihu*) and marriage affiliation is traditionally the basis for identity and priorities in mutual help (Forth 1981).

In Bali and Sumba members of these identity groups frequently conduct ceremonial activities for religious reasons, but also as a way of performing and consolidating their social network membership (Keane 1997, 173). For those events, they contribute food, labour and money as well as ceremonial assets like, in Sumba, hand-woven ikat cloth, pigs, horses and buffaloes. Mutal assistance is not only a matter of food and direct physical care, but extends to other types of care, in wider networks than neighbourhoods. Sahlins (1974, 1969) argued that degrees of social distance determine the way people assist each other in moral economies. Social proximity can be expressed in many ways, in terms of kinship as in the case of Sumba, or in reference to the *banjar adat* community in Bali. The customary jurisdictions of the indigenous institutions *banjar* and *kabihu* include matters that are at stake for social security: shelter, care, livelihood, well-being, mutual help that extend beyond their institutional boundaries.

This description of societal institutions is rather normative, presenting an image of solidarity between the members of these institutions. However, moral economies usually have internal hierarchies that create power differences and differential access to the benefits of the reciprocal exchange system. While the Balinese fishing village lacked aristocratic lineages and significant differences in wealth based on landholdings that would be characteristic in other parts of the island, this was not the case in the Sumba study. Traditionally, within the Sumba clans there is a class hierarchy in three ranks: nobility, freemen and slaves (Forth 1981, 214). There is no open discourse about class distinctions in present-day Sumba, and the difference in class does not automatically show in levels of poverty or lifestyle. However, although slavery has long been abolished by law in Indonesia, in practice these class distinctions still exist and determine livelihoods, choice of marriage partner and opportunities for upward (economic) mobility. The first case[11] below illustrates present day reciprocities between members of the nobility class in the form of labour, care, food, education, employment opportunity, shelter and financial support within a kinship network that stretches beyond the Sumbanese village of origin. The second case is about restricted opportunities to benefit from the moral economy.

3.3. Reciprocity in a Sumbanese kinship network

Agus was born in a village in East Sumba as the second son in a subsistence farming family. Despite their nobility status, the family lived from the produce of their garden on clan land in the hills and rice from their own rain-fed paddy fields in the valley, but had very little surplus or assets they could sell to spend on things beyond the bare necessities. When he was twelve years old and had many younger siblings, Agus moved to stay with his aunt (father's sister) and uncle, a retired teacher living close to a secondary school, who also had hosted his father before he was married. Agus was a bright boy and his parents hoped that a good education would eventually enable him to become a government official with a steady income. The uncle paid school fees, and in return Agus performed household chores, and worked his uncle's paddy fields. After graduation, one of the uncle's sons, cousin Petrus, invited Agus to stay with him in the district capital town, Waingapu, and arranged employment as an office boy. That job gave Agus the opportunity to

develop computer skills and knowledge about rural development work. In his cousin's house he did household chores and babysitting. Agus was one of eleven relatives in Petrus' household in 2017: Petrus' nuclear family of four, and seven unmarried young men and women between the ages of 16 and 30, all originating from Agus and Petrus' home area. They shared meals from the single kitchen. Reciprocating this care, the boys' or girls' parents would bring produce from the village, such as dried fish. In their home village, Petrus' relatives cultivated his rice fields (additional to their own fields), while Petrus bought agricultural inputs and decided when and what to plant. Because Petrus' home is close to the hospital it also functioned as point of access to medical care for the extended family in the village. Agus continued his education after working hours at the applied university while staying with Petrus. His monthly wage covered his university fees. Without lodging expenses, he could send the balance of his wage to two of his sisters in the village for their own education. He increased his capital when he bought a pig for his mother and siblings to feed and take care of in the village. After graduation, Agus easily found a job as field facilitator for a government social protection program, with a salary that tripled his previous office boy's wage.

This case is about reciprocity among members of two households with close social relationship despite physical distance. For the village household the story is about their children's escape from subsistence agriculture through education. That is a common strategy for upward economic mobility of children from Sumba's nobility, who can rely on their relatives working in government offices in town. For the household in town, it is a way to keep a link with the land, houses and family in the village, as the cultural and natural resource base of the extended family. For both, it means sharing food, care, labour and capital. However, whether sharing takes place equitably cannot be answered in general, nor objectively.[12] Generalised reciprocity in this case does not specify explicit rights to the individual, or fixed terms of trade between labour and monetary support. For example, it could mean that foster children receive meals of lesser quality than their host. Personal relationships also influence the terms of reciprocity in such cases. An example of extensions beyond normal kinship boundaries is reflected in Petrus agreeing to host a boy from the village whose family was not close kin. The boy's father got acquainted with Petrus through various development projects, and that relationship of cooperation was sufficient to ask boarding for his son to enable access to a good school. In that case, the boy's parents paid the school fees themselves, while he did household chores after school at Petrus' house

Where shared kinship among nobility proved a positive asset in finding opportunities for household welfare for Agus, the next case from the first author's field research in Central Sumba in 2015[13] shows an opposite case in which reciprocity mechanisms were adversely affected by hierarchic distinctions, with the consequence that the social security mix of a subsistence farmer's family is decreasing.

Wunga, a commoner man in his early fifties, lived with his wife in an old kampong of a village that used to be the seat of a raja in colonial times. The raja's descendants have dominated village governance ever since, ruling the population in autocratic style. Although Wunga has inherited land from his father, it is very difficult to make ends meet. The government organised a farmers' group that cooperates

in preparing the rice fields for planting using their shared hand tractor, but Wunga does not participate. He needs all his energy for working on his own land, and for taking turns in herding the buffaloes of the kampong's own rice farmers' group that relies on buffaloes for preparing the soil of the rice fields by trampling. His wife participates in the related women's group that plants rice seedlings on each of the members rice fields in turn, reciprocating through labour exchange. There are no daily wages, but the group members receive some rice at the time of the harvest. Their labour is tied. Wunga does not produce a surplus that he can sell. When a large tree that fell in front of his house after a storm laid waiting to be processed for timber and firewood, Wunga did not have the money to rent a chainsaw. An option to earn some money came up when the government organised a road construction project, promising a connection between isolated hamlets and the new harbour at the north coast, so that passing trucks and cars would create market demand for local produce. However, the village government asked villagers to "voluntarily" take care of the construction work and prepare meals for the workers, while the budget was spent on materials and machines. The work ended when the budget was finished, but the road was only half completed, with a dead end in front of Wunga's house. On the day of my visit, the village head (Raja's descendent) celebrated an important *adat* wedding ceremony, which Wunga was supposed to attend, but did not because he did not have anything acceptable as a proper adat gift. Despite all the shortages, Wunga and his wife accommodated his cousin's widow who had never received school education at all but could help in the house in return for sharing their basic subsistence household livelihood.

3.4. Alternative interpretations of moral economy's obligations

The story of Agus can be read in several ways. It indicates how kinship ties function as a network for reciprocal exchange, showing how Agus has been able to use the opportunities available in his network for his upward mobility. It contains examples of generalised reciprocity in which Agus receives not only food, but also free housing, money for education fees, and a position as office boy. The "gifts" are not completely free but create obligations to reciprocate: in the short term in the form of household assistance; but in the long-term there is a moral obligation to help other members of the close kin group with money to pay university fees or for health care expenditures and contribute to ceremonial exchange obligations (Hoskins 2004). These long-term obligations that are not specified nor limited in time period or kind compose a central feature of a moral economy. They reflect important social values and institutions in contrast to the direct, impersonal market exchanges that in economists' reckoning typically reflect self-interest (Bloch and Parry 1989). Investing in the social networks and relationships involved in such long-term circulation of material goods and care is valuable as a way of self-protection against uncertainties (De L'Estoile 2014, S69–S71). Maintaining these network relationships is particularly necessary in situations in which there are no alternative (affordable) insurance systems available, and provisions from a welfare state are absent or insufficient.

The unspecified long-term obligation ties receivers to the reciprocal network, cemented and institutionalised in both Bali and Sumba through ritual cycles. Carrier (2018,23) stresses this point when arguing that in order to understand the "moral" of moral economy it is not sufficient to concentrate on values and rights but there also should be attention to implicit obligations. An individual person in a moral economy context might not adhere to all the values of his community, but the consequence of having entered the network of reciprocities that rests on those values is accepting the obligations attached to "gifts" and the relations they underpin.

The case of Wunga underscores that the system of reciprocities and obligations does not always support the quality of a person's welfare. Power differences related to the use of land or in Wunga's case, buffaloes, or between villager leaders and commoners, move powerless people into a position in which they can be exploited. They have to provide labour on disadvantageous terms. Without an option for earning money continuous indebtedness increases dependence with vulnerability to exploitation. Moreover, Wunga's inability to offer gifts and participate increases the risk of exclusion from the "moral economy". The case suggests that without links with benevolent kinsmen outside the village there is no escape option for those who are trapped in low external input subsistence agriculture. For people like Wunga, the government's social protection policies are important as short-term relief, although the direct cash transfers are unlikely to improve their situation in any structural way.

The story of Agus is about sharing, gifts, and long-term reciprocities, but it also includes market exchange, for example selling fish and buying a pig. Market commodities can be converted into moral economy exchange items, as in the case of raising pigs to become contributions to ceremonial events like weddings and funerals. The present day local economy in Sumba cannot be understood as a separate moral economy sphere operating in accordance with traditions, but is a mixture of market and moral economy. A challenge in such a plural economic context is not to make as much money or profit as possible, but to find a balanced mix of economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu 1986, 241–259).[14] Agus was quite successful in moving upward, escaping from the poverty that holds most relatives in the village in its grip. He succeeded in expanding his networks, not only kinship relations but also among fellow students and in his professional working environment with a varied social security mix as result. The plurality we see in practice reflects the values, the economic systems and the social networks involved. Agus provides an example of how he combined market rationality with the norms of reciprocity, redistribution and exchange considered proper within his community. Now that such economic pluralism has become the rule because of globalisation and market incorporation, the question is to which extent such incorporation continues to take place and how villagers deal with the resulting mix of alternatives available.

4. State components in the social security mix

How do villagers in rural Indonesia access state social protection programs as part of their social security mix? In our comparative ARC research project we found that villagers across Indonesia have access to a number of state social protection programs (McWilliam et al. 2023). There is financial support for households

with school children to support access to education (Family Hope Program, PKH); there is free basic health care accessible with the Healthy Indonesia Card (KIS); and there is the subsidised rice program for poor households (Welfare Rice, RASTRA).[15] Households cannot actively apply for state support, but instead qualify as recipients based on criteria that are set nationally for each specific program. The consequence is that needy households should be on the lists of rightful recipients prepared by the authorities. Evaluations of these social protection programs indicated mistargeting as a main problem, with evidence that only 47 per cent of the RASTRA recipients nationally in 2014 were actually poor (Sumarto 2023, 354).

The RASTRA program's design, in which rice is distributed in accordance with official lists, intended to be predicated on need, has created a new distinction in the village – being on the list or not. Those people not on the list are excluded, and as a result receiving RASTRA is not a part of their social security mix. By contrast, any of the relatively better off who find themselves on the list might claim rights on the basis of equal entitlement, but at the expense of evidently differential needs. In our field research in Bali and Sumba, we found deviations from the prescribed distribution procedure, evidenced also in other case studies covered in the comparative research project (McCarthy, McWilliam, and Nooteboom 2023).

In most *banjars* in Bali, as in villages in other parts of Indonesia, popular preference leans towards equal distribution of government rice supports among all members (McWilliam et al. 2023, 71), despite the state's insistence that RASTRA subsidised rice is reserved for those officially classified as "poor". Disaffection with this state welfare principle arose from the difficulties of establishing acceptable criteria for determining "poverty" and need, as well as official misrecognition of socio-economic vagaries in its application of material asset-based categories for exclusion (such as possession of a permanent dwelling, electricity, sanitation facilities, or a motorbike). For example, in the research village in Bali, one family with six children received RASTRA, but lost subsidies for high school education because welfare department fieldworkers checking criteria decided their tile and cement house was "permanent", making them no longer eligible. In Central Sumba in April 2015, a similar strict implementation occurred when a household living in a wooden house adjacent to the cement and tile house of wealthy relatives was removed from the PKH list with the argument the two households were considered co-residing.

At the time of research in 2015–2018, the state apparatus leaned heavily on bureaucratic classification processes to ensure that regulations were upheld, theoretically in the interest of transparency, accountability and efficient use of government revenue. Since the enactment of the 2014 Village Law (Vel and Bedner 2015), local leaders were deterred from making local policy adaptations under threat of sanctions for failing to stick to official regulations. Meanwhile, the official lists of recipients were widely contested as out of date and corrupted by political interests (at which level of government was also a contentious subject). RASTRA had easily become a political instrument of village government officials seeking votes in exchange for access to cheap rice. Redistribution creates complex articulations between state welfare and moral economy: it adds the dimension of dependency on the village head and thus pressure to reciprocate his benevolence (Keane 2019,19).

Banjar leaders in Bali complained of being caught between a rock and a hard place trying to satisfy local perceptions of need and fairness and often inappropriate state requirements as local management of RASTRA distributions became increasingly centrally regulated and restricted. Because of the decline in the local fishery since 2010 (Warren and Steenbergen 2021), nearly half the fishers in this *banjar* became poor or vulnerable. Many had been forced to seek casual unskilled work mainly in the construction industry outside the village, which like fishing is erratic and poorly paid. In efforts to update the central government lists to include these new poor and vulnerable, the *banjar* leadership worked out that nearly half of those households deemed genuinely "poor" were not receiving rice distributions because of outdated government lists. The *banjar* head described the tensions involved:

> In the past we used to distribute the rice rations equally to all households in the *banjar*. That made sense to villagers who saw themselves as equally entitled as *banjar* members. With the new Village Law in 2014, we were told we had to stick to the government lists. At the same time, the list was reduced from 220 to 85 recipients. We were warned not to alter the official distributions under threat of legal prosecution! (Interview with administrative *banjar* head, September 2016)

In this *banjar*, members went so far as to formally request that the government remove their names from the RASTRA recipient list and redistribute the monthly rice provisions to families that were in genuine need. Their letter was signed by 48 of the 85 people on the official government RASTRA list. But no formal response or list correction resulted from this local moral economy grounded appeal.

One way of assessing the relative importance of the state social protection programs for poor village households is to compare the annual size of transfers as a percentage of their household consumption. In the case of Sumba, where people in the villages mostly grow their own food crops and additionally gather from the fields, forest and coastal water, total consumption could not be calculated (because villagers do not measure what they take for daily consumption), let alone expressed in market prices. In that situation people only sell produce when they need cash for a specific purpose of expenditure. However, it was possible to calculate the total revenue of what the households had sold annually and compare that with the value of rice subsidy received. In the research village without rice fields, we calculated an average annual cash income of nearly 7 million Rupiah (519 USD) for each poor household, and 11.4 million (844 USD) per non-poor household (Vel and Makambombu 2023, 149). RASTRA's provision of 15 kilograms rice per household per month at the market value of 10,000 IDR per kilogram would have a market value of 1.8 million. Data from the survey showed that real expenditures for buying subsidised rice were around 0.9 million per household per year, which means that rice subsidy equalled thirteen percent of poor and eight per cent of non-poor households' cash income. It should be noted that the annual cash income excludes the value of the household's consumption from its own production and from barter exchange, which is the larger part for subsistence farming households.

Comparing this assessment with the Balinese case study is complicated. The average household classified as "poor" had higher cash incomes than in Sumba at 15 million rupiah (1,110 USD) per annum, but with a smaller proportion of self-subsistence in the mix and high ritual costs pressing on annual expenditures.

The non-poor households surveyed had average earned incomes of 41 million rupiah (3,037 USD) excluding government subsidies. But a number of households in this non-poor category were only marginally on that side of the dividing line. RASTRA rice subsidies represented six percent of total annual income for poor households, while contributing two percent to those in the non-poor category. Taken together all forms of government assistance represented 39% of average total annual cash income among the poor households surveyed and six percent for the non-poor households surveyed in the Balinese case study (Warren 2023, 232).

Although current policies for social protection in Indonesia provide recipients with some cheap rice and cash, they do not address "entrenched structural drivers of social vulnerability, nutritional insecurity and underemployment" (McWilliam et al. 2023, 79). For long-term social security, people in the villages in Bali and Sumba cannot rely on the present state social protection programs, but need to maintain good relations within their communities and networks that support the sustainability of the common pool social, cultural and environmental resources that guarantee subsistence livelihoods. Moreover, social security refers not just to food and income, but also includes the fundamentally relational aspect of care.

5. Care as a critical element of the social security mix

The cases we have described above all include activities that we could consider as care, as in looking after the wellbeing of fellow kin or community members. The fishers shared fish with neighbours who had no catch of their own, Agus acted as babysitter, Petrus invited Agus to stay at his house, and Wunga provided shelter for his cousin's widow; and *banjar* members attempted to redistribute government subsidised rice. The shorter the social distance, the more likely care is not perceived as labour but an expression of relationship between households, close kin or community members.

But what happens if the family or neighbours central to providing care have migrated? Relationships with network members who no longer live in the village are maintained through ceremonial exchanges, but are less likely to extend to everyday mutual support obligations where they are not reinforced by shared institutional and relational bonds with the community (*banjar/desa*) of origin. The complexity and variety of social security or support mechanisms that arise as side-effects of migration is evident from K. von Benda-Beckmann's studies that focus on care as one aspect of looking after each other, starting with her article on changing patterns of care among Moluccan women who had migrated to the Netherlands (K. von Benda-Beckmann (1991) 2007, 257–279). Her research explored how these "circles of solidarity" come under pressure in situations of rapid social, economic and political change (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2003, 3). Which network of support is available for daily care when a person falls ill? Who will be looking after basic needs, getting medicine, checking regularly? And who will be taking over tasks or work that the sick person would normally do? Where this might have been an obvious matter in the extended households in villages in Ambon in the 1980s (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2015), for migrants who have left the primary circle of solidarity of family and neighbours in their place of origin, this simple form of care is often very uncertain,

especially when living in a one-person apartment in a big city. Also, for the villagers staying behind in the places from which many have out-migrated, providing such primary care has become problematic, because the few people left have to do all the work.[16] Moral economy's norms of taking care of each other can no longer be easily fulfilled.

Care and the networks that provide for it might seem distinct from social security concerning food, but in practice they are ultimately interdependent. From the perspective of people in the rural areas engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, the basis of social network relations is in providing food and care to their network members. The strength of these social security networks depends ultimately on the existence and quality of their community resource bases of land, forest, fish (Gudeman 2008, 28). In this respect, growing rice, feeding pigs and distributing fish must be considered a broader form of care-taking than mere provision of basic material needs, since they underpin the satisfaction of needs that are social and cultural as well as material.

6. Social security and agrarian change in Bali and Sumba

The available social security mix is also influenced by wider factors of social, economic and environmental change. Our research in 2015–2021 included the effects of major changes that took place over the last two decades in our research areas in Bali and Sumba. The larger perspective of agrarian change shows how vulnerabilities and precarity are created or exacerbated by factors beyond the control of villagers. Under such circumstances, we need to explore how these external factors may change people's strategic choices in constructing their social security mix, or may limit their own or others' options.

The debates over subsidised rice distributions (RASTRA) in Bali took place in a period of decline in the local fishery when nearly half the fishers in this *banjar* had been forced to seek casual unskilled work outside the industry. In this case, agrarian change has been caused by environmental degradation of the coastal land and waters surrounding Bali (Warren 2016, 2023; Warren and Steenbergen 2021).

Some among the next generation of fishing households opted for labour migration as a solution to the loss of livelihood in their fishery. Migration affects the social security of a population profoundly. "Networks of support may expand in terms of distance, but the networks become more stratified and members come to take different positions, while the available resources change" (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2008, 130). The opportunities for labour migration also change over time due to factors beyond the control of the migrants and their relatives back home. The COVID pandemic in 2020–2021 brought a dramatic change in Bali where the tourism industry is the major economic sector (McCarthy et al. 2023, 426). Labour migrants who had found employment in hotels and restaurants or in businesses related to tourism lost their source of income. Many returned to their home villages hoping they could rely on their home community's resource base. For low-skilled labour migrants from Sumba returning to their village was often possible because land for growing food crops was available. Their return disturbed the expectations of the social network at home whose members had invested in making migration

possible hoping to receive remittances. Fishing and farming families in Bali absorbed return migrant relatives into depleted but at least basic subsistence-oriented livelihoods. Basic food security was not the issue during the pandemic for fishing and farming households in Bali and Sumba, but instead it was the development trajectory associated with ever-expanding commercial fishing and urban mobility options that have been most seriously undermined. The resilience of these home networks may be able to cope with short term crises, but long-term environmental decline is likely to be another matter.

Labour migrants who had succeeded in obtaining permanent employment with a good salary in sectors not negatively affected by the COVID pandemic restriction measures (for example government positions) continued sending financial support to their home village if requested. This illustrates the importance of education as an investment strategy for villagers in Sumba: it is an important means to long-term social security for all of those who have contributed to the costs of education of the person who eventually holds the salaried position.

Another factor of agrarian change was particularly important in Sumba for its impact on the moral economy and people's social security mix (Vel and Makambombu 2021). Globalisation and climate change create a conducive environment for the spread of pandemics, not only affecting humans as in the case of COVID, but livestock as well. For example, the African Swine Fever (ASF) killed most pigs in 2021 in Sumba. As mentioned, pigs are important assets in which people in Sumba invest their money, feed crops and labour. In times of crisis these pigs can be sold, but more importantly they are a major currency in ceremonial exchange. One impact of the swine fever epidemic was that at ceremonial events like weddings and funerals people could not fulfil their obligations of presenting pigs. In 2021, temporarily the rules were adapted, allowing for replacing pigs with cash. That was a solution for people earning a salary, but not for self-sufficient subsistence farmers with no capacity for earning cash. Consequently, the latter ran the risk of being marginalised from and weakening the ceremonial social networks, which would result in a loss of social security on top of the loss of their pigs as material assets.

7. Social security and relational social theory

In more recent publications, K. von Benda-Beckmann has further developed the theoretical basis for her earlier work on social security with a new debate on the application of relational social theory in research on legal pluralism (K. von Benda-Beckmann 2021). When network relationships are stretching beyond the home community with its prevailing moral economy practices, individuals have a reason for reflecting and reconsidering who they are in relation to others; which social relations remain important, and which have become more distant so that maintenance receives less priority? As the individual person's situation is a reflection of legal and economic pluralism, a person has a plurality of identities, and with it the option of strategic choice. However, as our case studies have shown, the poorest people are those with limited circles of solidarity because they lack the means to live up to many reciprocal obligations. They have little choice in composing a

personal social security mix, and the state social support they receive is relatively more important than for their less poor relatives and neighbours.

Relational theory draws attention to the difference in perceptions of personhood between two extremes. An extreme individualist idea of personhood, developed in Enlightenment philosophy, regards persons fundamentally as fully autonomous entities. A "person" signifies an autonomous human being with powers of rationality, thinking, feeling and making choices, and one who is ultimately responsible for their actions. By contrast, in the most extreme form of holism persons cannot even be distinguished from the group to which they belong. This second notion once found considerable traction among scholars who encountered cultures in which people saw themselves primarily as part of their kin group or village community. For our research in Bali and Sumba in the 1980s, we also found this perspective predominant in public discourse (Warren 1993, Vel 1994). Social scientists have pointed out that individuals could not be seen as free to the extent that their identity and social relations are bound by their community (Bowen 1986; Suwignyo 2019, Scott 1976). In classic studies about moral economy persons tend to be perceived stereotypically and with limited agency when authors write about holistic communities. In that holistic perspective persons have an individual identity composed of ascribed characteristics such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, clan membership, gender, marital status, etc. The difference between personhood and identity that matters in relation to contemporary social security questions is the extent of the person's ability to make choices. In other words, it requires personhood to prioritise which social relations create the best social security mix in the given circumstances.

As critical scholars have argued, the holistic perspective ignores inequality between members of such communities, usually concentrating on differences in decision-making power over communal land or other natural resources (Hall, Hirsch and Li 2011). The two case studies about Sumba suggest that adhering to communal identity is more relevant for those who have relatively better positions in the internal hierarchies of these communities. People whose labour is bonded by obligations in customary labour arrangements have little free choice in composing a personal social security mix. When present day state social protection programs target nuclear households as recipients, the relational notion of personhood is narrowed down to membership of a household, while ignoring all other social relations of individual members of those households that are important for their social security. Such individual household entitlement to state support is potentially important relief for community members who do not receive much benefit from either moral economy arrangements or globalising market opportunities.

8. Conclusions

The aim of our article was to show the relevance of Keebet von Benda-Beckmann's work on social security, and especially her focus on the social security mix that demonstrates the existence of often overlooked moral economy dimensions. As a contribution to debates on the politics of distribution that concentrate on poverty alleviation, this article has argued for a social security perspective on welfare that

comprises more than food and income. We have examined how state welfare and moral economy mechanisms articulate in the Indonesian case studies, and found that people's present day social security mixes are composed of both state-provided support and reciprocal provisioning from social networks that compose circles of solidarity. Moreover, for each element of the social security mix there is a distinct network for providing the services needed, and these networks go beyond fixed boundaries of household and village.

Design of state social protection policies should be based on careful knowledge about those people's protection mechanisms that already exist in society, about the causes of vulnerability, and about precarity created by government economic policies that have negative effects on community resources bases – land, water, forests – on which their social security mechanisms are based. The need for protective policies with regard to environmental degradation and prevention of epidemics is also inextricable from social security provision. The prevailing modes of state social security contribute to keeping rural populations in place, preventing destitution and slowing down labour migration. However, the size of cash transfers and rice allocations are not sufficient for creating structural solutions, and will never be if environmental degradation and land dispossession is not halted. If rural populations are to be acknowledged as caretakers of the land and community natural resources bases – as the basic wealth of the nation – they should be rewarded for these services, for example by community payments for ecosystem services (Neilson 2023, 453), instead of given piecemeal social allowances. The state will have a great challenge in creating policies that protect its citizens living in poverty from the effects of the dramatic changes taking place as a consequence of environmental degradation and other global anthropogenic crises compounding economic, social and technological transformations already disrupting anticipated development trajectories.

"Care" in the broader sense, furthermore, is something the state cannot provide adequately because of its "social distance" from ordinary citizens. It faces difficulty responding quickly to changing conditions. In this regard, evidence from the covid pandemic, and environmental deterioration (fisheries and animal rearing in our cases) have localised or sectoral impacts that affect individual households differentially. The focus on care and functional relationships raises the question of whether the increasing optionality of the social security mix that is especially clear in the case of migration threatens the relationality that underpins "moral economies" at the local level. It was these moral economic relations that filled the breach during the pandemic, allowing migrants to return to their villages of origin for basic security.

Rural communities have become increasingly integrated in larger contexts, as a consequence of migration, globalisation, and the impact of capitalist industries that affect their resource bases causing environmental degradation and dispossession. This widening context will affect the reflexivity of people who formerly thought of themselves mainly as local community or kin-group members. Under such changing circumstances social distance becomes a matter of extended "relationality" rather than prescribed identity characteristics or geographical distance.

Reciprocal obligations keep social networks alive and with these, the moral economic dimensions of social security remain a critical aspect of modern sensibilities, policy and politics. The challenge in such a pluralist context is to find a balanced

mix of state and local, institutional and relational foundations for economic, social and cultural capital construction (Bourdieu 1986, 241–259) that will equitably and sustainably support rural and urban livelihoods.

Notes

1. Research for this paper included surveys as well as formal and informal interviews carried out by the authors in Bali (Jembrana District) and Sumba (East Sumba District) for the Australian Research Council funded project "Household Vulnerability, Food Security and the Politics of Social Protection in Indonesia" (ARC Discovery No. DP140103828) in 2015–2018. Both authors rely as well on additional data from previous projects and long term participant observation in both locations before and since the ARC project for the arguments presented in this paper.
2. For a review of this book see Neilson 2023.
3. See, for example, the debate on state cash transfers as the new 'politics of distribution' which frames social welfare policy debates in terms of neo-liberal and moral economy counterpoints (Ferguson 2015; Nerenberg 2022; Nilsen 2021).
4. For an elaborate explanation of the functional approach see the original article in F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann (1994), which is also included as Chapter 2 in F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann (2007). Their empirical definition is that "social security refers to the social phenomena with which the abstract domain of social security is filled: efforts of individuals, groups of individuals and organizations to overcome insecurities related to their existence, that is, concerning food and water, shelter, care, and physical and mental health, education and income, to the extent that the contingencies are not considered a purely individual responsibility, as well as the intended and unintended consequences of these efforts."(F. von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann, 1994, 14).
5. "Institutional" here refers to the broader sociological meaning of the word instead of the narrow meaning referring to state institutions.
6. These long-term aspects also include anticipation of needs in the future, generated by life events such as the birth of a child or death of a spouse (thanks to Melanie Wiber for this comment).
7. https://www.cbsnews.com/video/at-vatican-bernie-sanders-calls-for-a-more-moral-economy/ (last accessed on September 11, 2023).
8. Interviews from Carol Warren's research in Bali between July 2015 and September 2016.
9. Like gleaning in the context of traditional Balinese rice agriculture, called *munuh*, gleaners who were mostly women and children, have the right to all the grains laboriously collected.
10. There is a paradox between these assumptions in the design of social protection programs (technocratic) and the public discourse of a "holistic" view of rural life (romantic/nationalistic) which many state institutions' representatives and politicians refer to in their policy promotions and political speeches. Bowen's (1986, 546) discussion of mutual aid and the state's ideological construction of *gotong royong*, as opposed to the diverse locally grounded kinds of mutual assistance, already warned how the state's version became a cultural-ideological instrument for the mobilization of village labor during the New Order regime. At present this appropriation can be extended to many other fields, for example mobilizing votes in regional elections (Fatimah et al. 2023).
11. From Jacqueline Vel's research in East Sumba in April 2017 in cooperation with Stepanus Makambombu.
12. Schrauwers (1999) argued that the concept of foster children in Indonesia is positively presented in local discourse about care and mutual aid, but that in fact it often implicates child labour exploitation. We value debate about the normative evaluation of labour in the grey areas of these "reciprocities", but the complexity of the dialecti-

cal tensions involved requires separate treatment in its own right that is beyond the purpose of this article.

13. Field research conducted in Central Sumba, in the area of former PhD research, as preparation for the research project mentioned in note 1 (April 2015).
14. See Vel and Makambombu (2010) for an elaboration about the forms of capital in the context of Sumba.
15. These were the most important programs that we found in our research villages among the variety of social protection programs existing in Indonesia in 2016–2020 (see McWilliam et al. 2023).
16. Personal communication with Tody S. J. Utama (PhD researcher from Bali) about the care situation in Balinese villages (September 2023).

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