



A new rural social contract: water, land and political economy in the Maghreb

**Conference: *A new social contract for MENA countries:
Experiences from Development and Social Policies***

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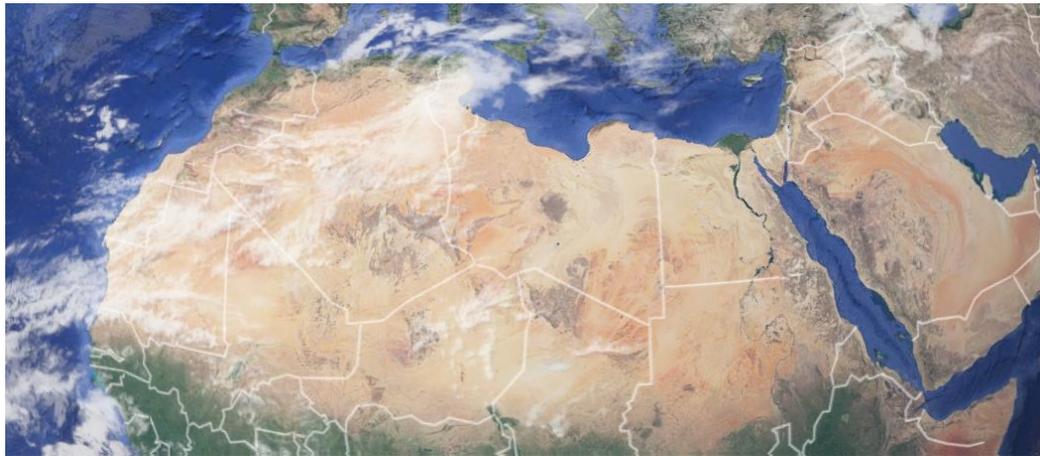
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1. **Introduction: the „rural social contract“**
2. **Three trends challenging the rural social contract**
 - 2.1 **Resource degradation** challenges established patterns of use/benefits/redistribution
 - 2.2 **Agricultural policies** further marginalize small farmers
 - 2.3 **New rural actors** challenge established relationships
3. **Conclusion**

1. Introduction: the „rural social contract“ in the Maghreb



Map: google earth

Agriculture in the Maghreb:

- 10- 20% of GDP
- 10-40% of jobs, often 80% in rural areas

But: water & land resources

- **Overexploited** (loss of 1% of GDP yearly)
- **Unequally distributed** (majority of smallholders; Tu 53% of farmers cultivate 9% of ar. land)
- **Highly politicised**



1. Introduction: the „rural social contract“ in the Maghreb



- **Semi-arid climate**
- **But important role of agricultural production** for employment, rural livelihoods, food production and economic development (TU, MA)
- **Access to water and arable land** are of enormous **strategic value** in the region, both at national and local level



1. Introduction: the „rural social contract“



- **Social contract as a sensitive balance between the regime's redistribution of gains in exchange for the populations' loyalty in a context of very limited (if at all) democratic governance, strong elite capture, fear and coercion**

(Heydemann; Al-Razzaz...; Kamrava: diversified econ. basis)

- **But: rural dimension neglected!**

(exc: Ayeb et al; Paciello et al; Gana)

- Although rural concerns were at the origin of many revolts such as in Tunisia
- And the problems at their origin persist



1. Introduction: the „rural social contract“



- **In non-oil/gas countries (Maghreb), benefits from NR/ agriculture important economic basis of the social contract/ power relations** (Leveau, Pascon, Waterbury, Pérènnès)
 - **Gvts consolidated authority** over rebellious countryside through water & land allocation
 - **Elites monopolize access** to water and land (before & after colonialism)
 - **Regimes in non oil/gas countries were even less able to financially compensate growing discontent and lacking socioeconomic development**
- **Term of the ‚rural social contract‘ to analyze and address persisting political economy of water and land use**

Towards a new social contract for the MENA region? Rural concerns and perspectives



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2. Three trends challenge the social contract: (1) resource degradation



Resource degradation challenges established patterns of use and redistribution

- **Availability of water and arable land is decreasing:** high environmental degradation, over-exploitation and climate change
- **But demand** for water and land is **still increasing** (irrigation, tourism, industry, urbanization...)



2. Three trends challenge the social contract: (1) resource degradation



Results in

- **Higher competition over land & water, growing inequalities** (access to irrigation water and systems, type of agric. production...)
- ... further reinforcing env. degradation



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2. Three trends challenge the rural social contract: (2) agricultural policies



Agricultural policies favor financially strong and politically influential agricultural entrepreneurs

- **Promotion of export-oriented agriculture** (accessible mainly to rich farmers)
- **Privatization and concentration of land:** many state cooperatives privatized (MA), public land leased to private investors, PPPs mostly benefit elites



2. Three trends challenge the rural social contract: (2) agricultural policies



**Goal of agricultural policies
is mainly to boost private returns on investment and the
national economy;
not rural development/ small farmers' concerns**





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2. Three trends challenge the rural social contract: (3) New rural actors



- a) **Political and economic elites investing in agriculture**
(politicians, business-men)
- b) **Well-educated young people returning to the ,douar‘**,
involved in local development (access to subsidies, national
development plans etc ... but less to social networks of notables:
not -yet- politicians)

New leaders demonstrate

- More **independence** from state-controlled **sources of income**
- More **independence** from traditional **social networks, notables**
- **Renegotiation of the social order** (but mainly at local levels)

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3. **Conclusion: which effects on rural social contract?**

3. Conclusion



„Social contract as a sensitive balance between the regime’s redistribution of gains in exchange for the populations’ loyalty“

- **Water and land still matter for the political economy: distribution of benefits (incl. laissez-faire)**
- **Term of a ‚rural social contract‘ to understand how these dynamics evolve**
- **This rural social contract is eroding/ being re-negotiated**



The rural social contract is eroding/ re-negotiated

- **Economic basis changes;** less redistribution of benefits from natural resource use bc of land and water concentration/scarcity
- **Social basis changes:** increased role of private sector/ businessmen but also of new local leaders
- **‘Contract’ questioned since states neglect their responsibilities towards the rural citizens**

- **Common vision for a new rural social contract?**
 - Perspectives for rural development beyond private benefits?
 - Broader social mobilization in rural areas?
 - Environmental sustainability?

Thank you for your attention!

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