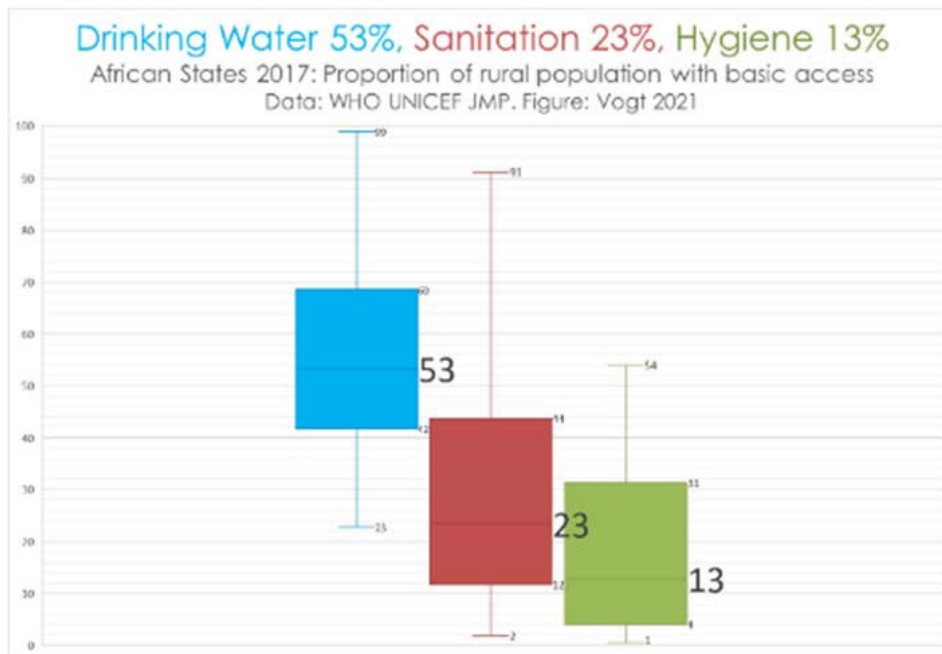


Chemnitz 9 July 2024, “Women in Africa” conference

Stefan GARSZTECKI, Matthias Theodor VOGT, Peter LAH, Martin NKAFU NKEMNKIA

Smart Villages

Infrastructure and common property in sub-Saharan Africa
Collectively owned infrastructure for drinking water and wastewater,
waste disposal and recycling, electricity and digital communication



What we want to change:

The proportion of women in rural areas
with at least basic access to drinking water,
sanitation, hygiene + energy, waste, internet

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0 Basic information

0.1 The fate of Africa is decided by its majority population (70 %), living in villages and towns with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants.

It is time for the global community to actively recognise the injustice towards people living in villages and small towns. This applies in particular to the abolition of injustice towards women living there.

To use the [slightly modified] words of the preamble to the UN Charter: “to reaffirm faith [...] in the equal rights of [women and men living in large communities, or indeed in smaller ones], / and to promote social progress and better standards of life [...] in larger freedom “.

0.2 Technical investments must first be mentally recognised by the community as their own. Only then can they be installed and operated sustainably.

The neglect of the mental and socio-cultural dimension is the Achilles heel of many “development aid” projects of the global North in Africa.

We are therefore proposing a Smart Villages project with a holistic approach.

This is based simultaneously on Dimension A (technical and economic engineering) and dimension B (social and cultural engineering).

0.3 The European idea of municipal law as an independent level of public authority below the state level was never consistently exported to Africa during the colonial era.

Since 1960, none of the African states have discovered and realised this as a development potential for civil society. As a result, a municipal infrastructure with **citizens as co-owners** of transport, water, sewage, waste and energy, as it was developed across the board in Europe around 1900, does not exist in Africa, but either state or commercial providers take on these tasks beyond a municipal concept.

We propose a **co-operative concept for infrastructure tasks in the Smart Villages project**. This breaks new structural ground, even though the co-operative concept as such has a long tradition in Africa.

0.4 The Smart Villages project is initially aimed at model villages and small towns.

Based on the experiences of the smaller model project, a report is to be prepared for the governments on the possibilities and problems of a large-scale follow-up project by the EU, AU, UN, World Bank (2030 sq.), which could change the living conditions of many African women and men.

0.5 A joint African-European strategy must draw on the call for subsidiarity in the papal encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno”.

It was formulated in 1931 against Mussolini and his contemporaries and is the basis of the European Union today. The endogenous prerequisites for a self-sustaining economic system and the reduction of dependencies can only be created through a **subsidiary bottom-up approach** and by promoting the creation of common property with the involvement of traditional and ecclesiastical forces.

0.6 The Global Health Security Index makes the causal relationship between access to clean water (Fig. 1.2), poverty (Fig. 1.3) and life expectancy (Fig. 1.4) dramatically clear.

The women and men in sub-Saharan Africa do not live “far away”—their fate will determine the migration flows to Europe. **Europe's development depends directly on hygiene in the villages of sub-Saharan Africa.**

0.7 A self-sustaining economic system needs functioning infrastructures (clean water and sewage, for waste disposal and recycling, for electricity and digital communication), otherwise the well-educated young elite will continue to migrate to the centres.

0.8 The development of infrastructural common property through co-operatives for the construction and operation of infrastructure must be placed largely in the hands of women.

Women in sub-Saharan Africa are largely discouraged from economic activities beyond subsistence production. Empirical evidence shows that women tend to handle assets more responsibly. “Corruption is male,” the World Bank stated succinctly.

Women should therefore have a 50 % or more share in the management of the cooperatives. The assumption of responsibility for the infrastructure of clean water, sewage, waste disposal and recycling, for electricity and digital communication by women would open a new chapter in the complex game of power, offspring, education and self-determined women's work.

0.9 The infrastructure facilities should be limited to the technical facilities for clean water and wastewater, waste disposal and recycling, electricity and digital communication.

(Works for schools, health centres, roads etc. etc. are expressly not to be funded, as their operation would overburden the programme and they should remain the responsibility of the federal states, regions and municipalities).

0.10 The programme combines the economic, ethical and cultural levels into a holistic win-win-win set of measures.

It picks up on pre-colonial and traditional mentalities, including equidistant gender relations, and creates the conditions for self-sustaining economic structures under the responsibility of local entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial communities without extra-continental and state dependencies.

1 Analysing the current situation

1.1 Common property as a prerequisite for a self-sustaining economic system

The gross domestic product of Africa as a whole—not including the informal sector, in which more than 90 % of the population lives—amounts to 2.5 trillion US dollars (2.5×10^{12}). The GDP of sub-Saharan Africa (excluding North Africa and the Republic of South Africa) amounts to USD 1.5 trillion or one sixtieth (1.63 %) of global GDP for one eighth of the world's population.

The volume of remittances from migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe has long exceeded official development aid and is only surpassed by the outflow of corruption money. The regimes that were able to establish themselves after 1960 in the shadow of the Cold War were formally post-colonial—the French, English, Portuguese and Spanish had to abdicate and make way for indigenous rulers. However, from a critical point of view, so little has changed structurally in terms of the framework conditions and for the general population that the new regimes cannot be described as “postcolonial”, but rather as “non-postcolonial”.

On the one hand, the regimes were and are powerless in the face of an informal economy that evades taxation and—in the case of Cameroon—accounts for 90.9 % of citizens' economic activities. On the other hand, they were and are more than busy fulfilling their family obligations through a tightly meshed system of corruption. Overall, there are signs that at least project corruption (“10 % for the minister”) is on the decline in some countries. Nevertheless, legal certainty remains a crucial problem for European direct investments abroad.

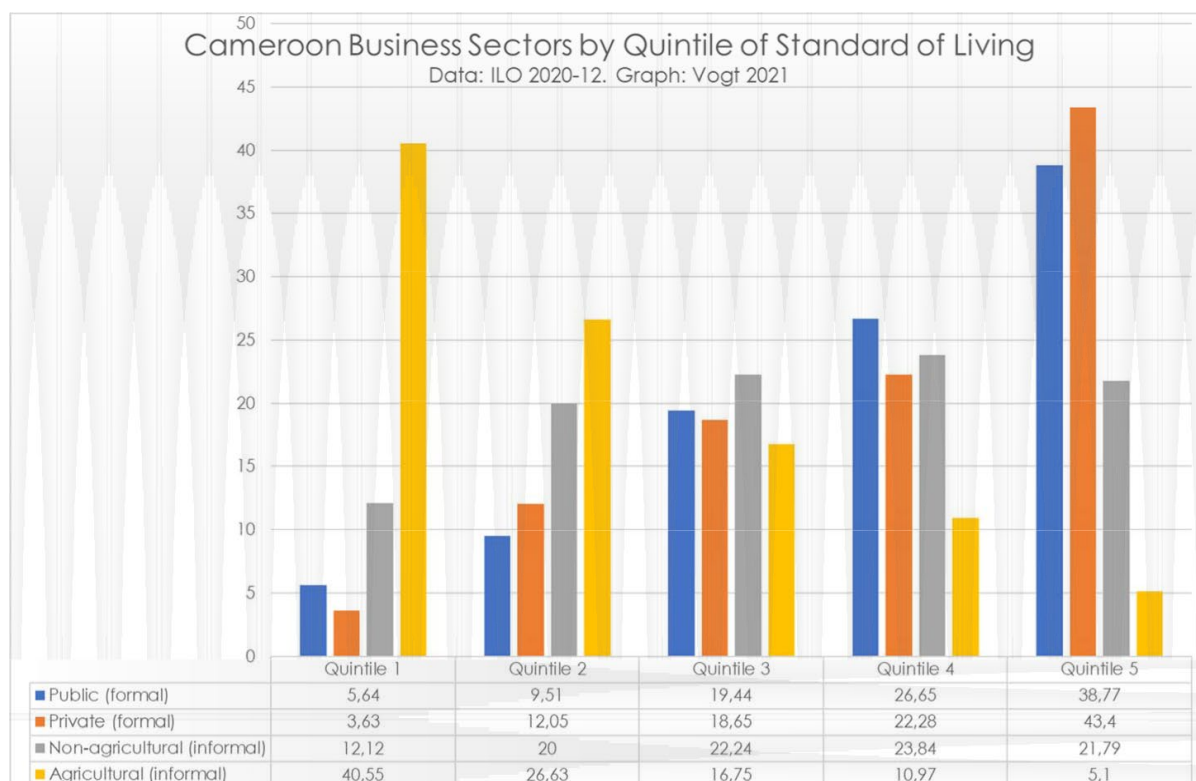
Promoting the creation of common property in sub-Saharan Africa is in the direct and indirect interest of Europe, in particular the member states of the European Economic Area (EU and EFTA). Directly, because in continuation of the earlier debt-for-nature approaches and in the style of the scrappage premium, sales markets can be created for the ailing plant engineering sector and other industries, which is much more sustainable than survival premiums. Indirectly, because only a self-sustaining economic system can stop migration to the highly unhygienic big city slums or directly to Europe at source, even in the small-town and village settlement areas of the rapidly growing population majorities of mostly 70 %.

However, a reversal of the migration process to the metropolises will only be possible once the cultural charge of the glittering skyscraper facades has given way to a newer and more resilient understanding of urbanity). Overcoming mentalities is a socio-cultural task that can only be meaningfully tackled with the means of the arts. We therefore recommend a supplementary programme—similar to the German Kunst am Bau programme—to communicate the necessities and consequences of hygiene in a playful and educational way.

The assumption of co-responsibility by women for the infrastructure of clean water, sewage, waste disposal and electricity would open a new chapter in the complex game of power, offspring, education and self-determined women's work. Until, in the distant future, bridging rather than bonding structures (in the sense of Robert Putnam) emerge and the tiresome issue of male cliques tends to become superfluous, so that people in the sub-Saharan peripheries have a chance to prove their suitability regardless of ethnic, social or biological characteristics.

1.2 Labour

To understand the rural exodus of young, educated people from the villages to the big cities, it is enough to look at the stark differences in earning potential. The different economic sectors lead to completely different income levels. Around forty per cent of those working in (subsistence) agriculture belong to the lowest quintile, while 5 % belong to the top quintile. In public administration and the private sector, it is exactly the other way round.

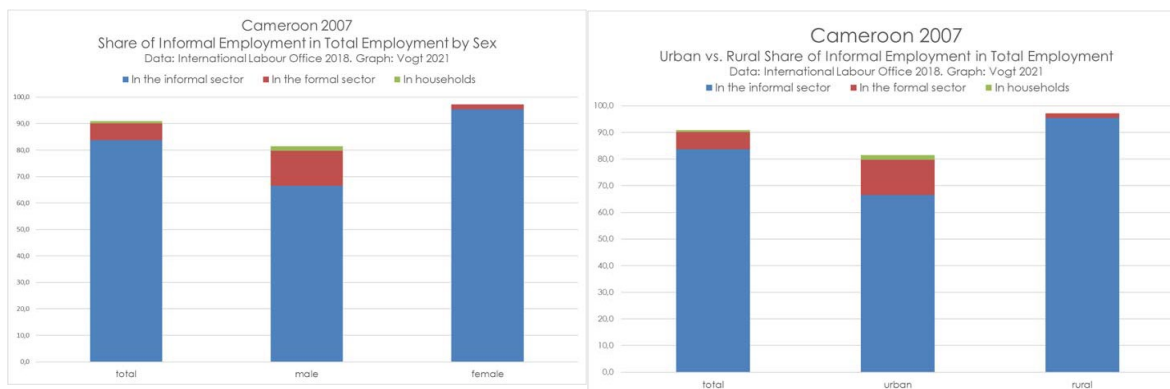


1.3 Informal employment

Informal employment in sub-Saharan Africa exists in three areas: in the informal sector itself, as informal employment in the formal sector and in households. (The latter area appears to be a male domain in Cameroon, albeit a marginal one). The largest gender gap is the difference in the share of informal employment between men (81 %) and women (9 5 %).

Informal labour means working without social security in a country with no social infrastructure. From a European perspective, it is impossible to fully understand the reality of the lives of those shown in the photos in our exhibition “Cameroon through the eyes of a thousand women” (<https://pea.lib.pt.ehu/handle/pea/44351>).

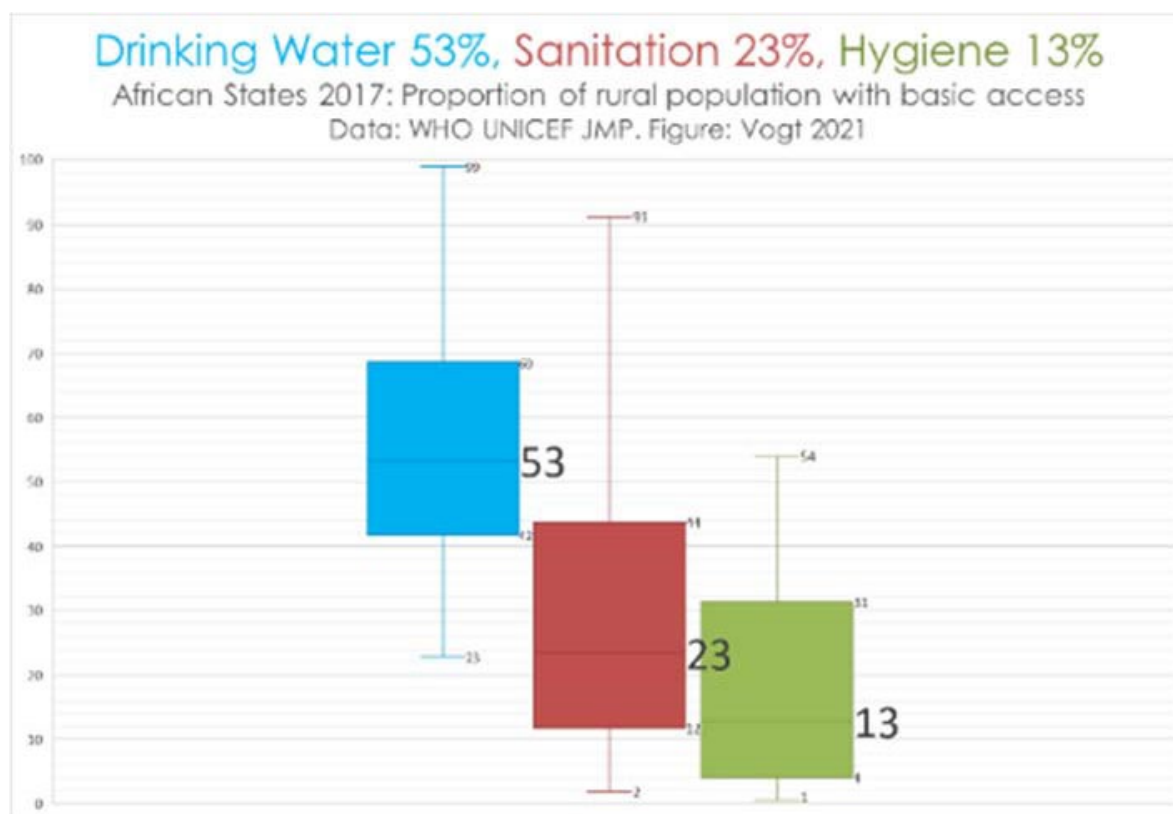
Working informally also means not being able to make an active contribution to building social structures. At the same time, the statistics show that urban areas are no paradise. Here too, 81 % of jobs are in the informal sector and earnings depend on the day.



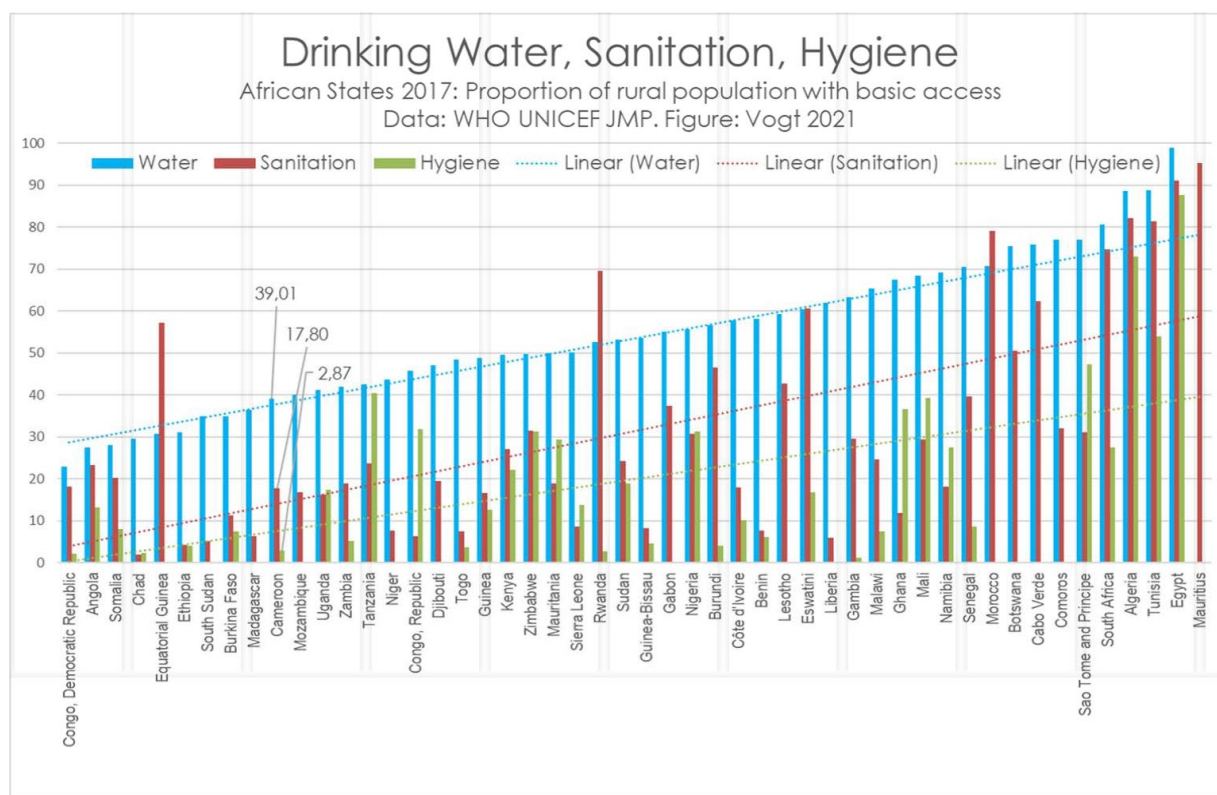
1.4 The current hygiene infrastructure in Africa

Ignaz Semmelweis invented obstetric hygiene. It is worth remembering that he had to literally wrestle his reform programme away from his chauvinist colleagues. From a hygienic point of view, it is extremely difficult to live in sub-Saharan Africa as a woman who “qui aime se sentir bien / dans sa peau de femme | who likes to feel good / in her woman skin” (Aimée Nguetmchueng).

According to the United Nations, 90.9 % of people in Africa live in communities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, compared to 81.8 % worldwide. In Cameroon, the situation is the same as in the Federal Republic of Germany at 71.0 %. In both cases, this is the majority of the population. So what is the supply situation for this majority of the population? According to the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene of the WHO and UNICEF (JMP 2019), 47 % of rural areas in Africa live without drinking water (the graph shows availability for 53 %, which is the reverse of this), 77 % without sanitation facilities and 87 % without hygiene facilities.



Mauritius, Egypt and the Maghreb states are at the top of the ranking, with Congo (DR), Angola, Chad and Equatorial Guinea at the bottom. In Cameroon, these figures are 60.9 %, 82.2 % and 97.2 % respectively.



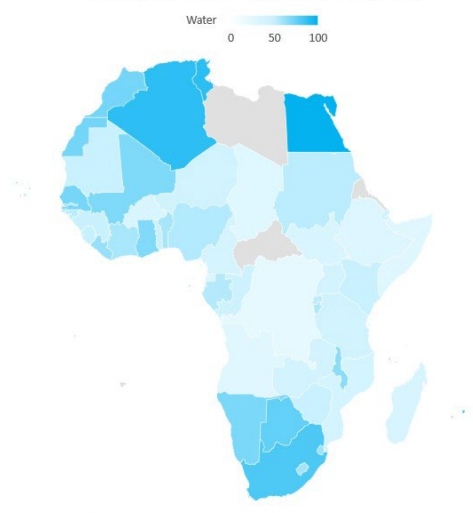
For Cameroon, the World Bank 2021 has presented data for development 2000-2017 in both urban and rural areas as well as for the national average. The infrastructure in the cities is essentially in place. Access to drinking water is 77 %, to sanitary facilities 56 % and to closed toilets 97 %.

However, two things are striking. Firstly, there has been virtually no progress in this decade; no significant investment has been made to keep pace with population growth. There appears to be insufficient awareness of investment prioritisation at either government or citizen level.

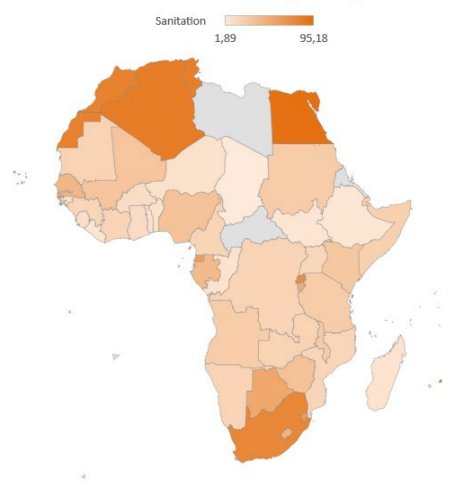
Secondly, the proportion of people who have access to at least basic handwashing facilities with soap is negligible: in urban areas 86 % do not have this facility, in rural areas the figure is 97 %. This is a shocking result, and not just from an immunological perspective.

A similar picture emerges for electricity. In the cities, 93 % have access, but in reality this is so often unavailable that, for example, refrigerators or even sensitive computer systems can hardly be operated without a private generator. In rural areas, only 24 % of the population have access to electricity. This means that they are de facto cut off from participation in modern forms of economic activity. The ground-breaking study by Hoornweg & Bhada-Tata (2012) on the subject of waste is limited to large cities, but waste disposal and recycling are no less of a problem in rural areas, not least in terms of intergenerational equity.

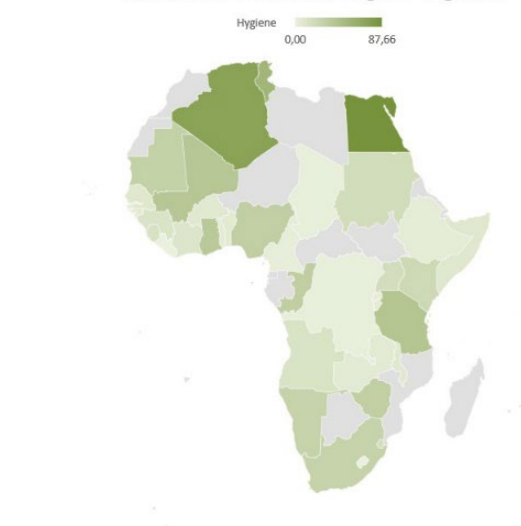
Basic Access to Drinking Water in Rural Africa 2017
Data: WHO UNICEF JMP. Figure: Vogt 2021



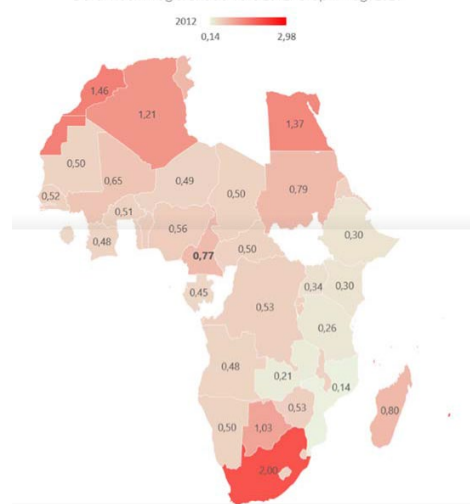
Sanitation in African States 2017
Proportion of rural population with basic access
Data: WHO UNICEF JMP. Figure: Vogt 2021



Hygiene--Basic Access in Rural Africa 2017 (median 13%)
Data: WHO UNICEF JMP. Figure: Vogt 2021



Urban Africa Municipal Solid Waste MSW
Generation Per Capita (kg/ capita/day)
Africa Median 0,51 (2012), 0,80 (2025 projection), Cameroon: 0,77; 1,00
Data: Hoornweg & Bhada-Tata 2012. Graph: Vogt 2021



1.5 Hygiene is a key prerequisite for a self-sustaining economic system and for a life in dignity

Work on sustainable development begins in the “minds of the people” (UNESCO preamble). Therefore, a pair of prerequisites can be found in all areas of life: the mental and the technical dimension. (a) Awareness and (b) infrastructure. Their coupling is a decisive prerequisite for living together in peace, prosperity and freedom.

The provision of infrastructure is futile if it is not understood as a common good. Hygiene is also based on two prerequisites: firstly, an awareness of the importance of hygiene standards and the ability to implement them in everyday life, and secondly, the infrastructure for clean water, sewage, waste disposal and electricity.

Common ownership of infrastructure was a matter of course in pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa. The traditional authorities were not owners, but administrators of the common property of the

infrastructure, modelled on the European entail. They ensured that the property remained untouched for generations. The relative success of today's Ghanaian economy compared to neighbouring countries is also due to the integration of the traditional authorities into the ownership structures.

In the early colonial period, there were hardly any hygiene standards in the colonisers' mother countries; as late as the 1920s, epidemics in Germany, for example, claimed tens of thousands of lives almost every year. In Europe, it was the municipalities that built and maintained the water pipes, sewerage systems, electricity grids and public transport systems. It was not the state that merely ordered things to be done. In the colonial areas, the state either did this or left the field to commercial companies or provided little or nothing. Communities in the European sense of perceived and legal-factual common property could not be formed. What so-called development aid had achieved since decolonisation around 1960 remained piecemeal and usually rusted away as soon as the European mechanics and their advisors had left.

The cooperative idea, on the other hand, has remained alive in sub-Saharan Africa to this day, for example in burial cooperatives. This living tradition could now be continued in the area of joint ownership of hygiene infrastructure.

1.6 Personal contributions and citizenship

The model project is aimed at *citoyenneté*—active co-responsibility for the local community.

African governments have enough to do with servicing, or rather not servicing, their debts to China, the World Bank, the Paris Club and individual governments. The development of infrastructural common property should take place without the financial involvement of African governments and outside of state corruption flows.

However, for example, 5 % of the required funds should be provided by the interested village or town communities through their own financial contributions before construction begins (in cash, without loans) and a further 5 %, for example, through their own contributions in kind such as land and labour. The infrastructure can only become common property if everyone contributes both financially and through labour.

“Expectation management” (Günter Nooke) is crucial to the success of an initiative. Infrastructure can only become common property if everyone makes a financial contribution as well as providing labour. A personal contribution that is appropriate to the circumstances is therefore essential for building ownership. For example, 5 % of the required funds should be raised by the interested village or town communities through financial contributions before the start of construction (in cash, without loans), and a further 5 % through contributions in kind such as land and labour from the cooperative members. The bottom-up approach would benefit from the participation of the diaspora, i.e. those who have successfully arrived in Europe.

The starting point is that there is no priority for traditional men here. According to Jacquineau Azetsop, the socio-cultural dimension should also be taken into account alongside the technical dimension.

2 Project partners

2.1 Social Policy

Chair of Cultural and Area Studies, Chemnitz University of Technology.

The professorship focuses on the comparative analysis of current developments in the countries, in particular along common research paradigms such as transformation, Europeanisation or places of remembrance. This includes the development of the young democracies of East Central Europe as well as current discourses of self-understanding in the fields of culture, history and politics. With the help of social science and cultural studies approaches, exogenous influences are to be identified and endogenous traditions analysed in the *longue durée*.

The holder of the professorship, Stefan Garsztecki, is a political scientist and historian. 10/1983-4/1989 Studied Political Science (major subject), Modern and Contemporary History and Cultural Geography (minor subjects) at the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn; specialising in Eastern Europe, International Relations, German Question, East-West Conflict. Magister Artium in Political Science at the University of Bonn. April 1989 4/1992-12/1994 PhD scholarship from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation September 1995 PhD in Political Science at the University of Trier, supervisor Prof. Dr Klaus Ziemer, second supervisor Prof. Dr Kurt Düwell. Employment including 1989-1992 Federal Institute for Overall German Tasks; 10/1993-6/1994 Lecturer at the Institute for Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Poland; 3/1996-10/2005 Research Assistant at the Department of East and Central European Studies at the University of Bremen; 11/2005-9/2009 Managing Director of the Department of East and Central European Studies at the University of Bremen and the Integrated European Studies programme; 10/2009-9/2010 Deputy (cum spe) Professor of Cultural and Area Studies at Chemnitz University of Technology. Since 10/2010 holder of the professorship.

Stefan Garsztecki is a member of: German Association for Political Science; German Association for East European Studies; Expert Commission for Economics and Social Sciences in the J.G. Herder Research Council of the Herder Research Institute Marburg; J.G. Herder Research Council; History Working Group of the German-Polish Youth Organisation; Network for Federalism Research (University of Tübingen); German-Polish Copernicus Group; reviewer for the DAAD (East Central Europe); liaison lecturer of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation at Chemnitz University of Technology (since May 2011).

2.2 Cultural Techniques

Saxonian Institute for Cultural Infrastructure

The Institute for Cultural Infrastructure (<http://kultur.org/>) has over 30 years of experience in cultural policy in both dimensions: practical legislative and executive work in hundreds of model art projects, as well as theoretical work in international research.

The director of the institute, Matthias Theodor Vogt, was already collecting money for the construction of wells in Lesotho at the age of twelve. His parents had accompanied Leontius Lelimo to Rome for his ordination as a priest, whose later visits to Europe awakened his enthusiasm for African infrastructures. Today, Vogt is one of the few specialists in Europe specialising in the cultural dimensions of social engineering. Vogt will teach as a visiting professor at Sophia University Tokyo in the winter semester 2024/25 and at the Gregorian University of Rome and the University of Naples Federico II in the summer semester 2025. Vogt holds a doctorate in

theatroylogy from the University of Munich; a doctorate in philosophy from the Technical University of Berlin; a doctorate in urban architecture and honorary professor from the University of Pécs; a doctorate juris honoris causa from the University of Ilia in Tbilisi; Officer of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland; Honorary Nobilitarian of the Kingdom of Batoufam (West Cameroon). Among his more than 400 publications, he has recently signed a major study on the socio-economic conditions of women in Central Africa (“Cameroon through the eyes of a thousand women”, 2023, scientific catalogue of the exhibition of the same name edited by Vogt). The University of Rome III published his extensive essay on the social and demographic impact of the state's anti-Cameroon measures.

CV short version https://kultur.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Vogt_CV_EN-short_2023-12-28.pdf;
CV long version https://kultur.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Vogt_CV_lang_2023-12-28.pdf.

2.3 Equality policy

Pontifical Gregorian University, Leadership & Management School, Rome

1551: St Ignatius of Loyola laid the foundations for the Pontifical Gregorian University by founding a free school of grammar, humanity and Christian doctrine in 1551, which for many centuries was called the Roman College. In 1552, Giulio III granted the Superior General or, with authorisation from that date, any of the future superiors or rectors of the colleges the faculty and the right to confer academic degrees on the Jesuit students of the Collegio Romano.

1584: However, Gregory XIII is considered the “founder and protector” of the Gregorian University, who built a new seat of the Roman College from the foundations, which was solemnly inaugurated in 1584, and endowed it with advantages and privileges, extending them to all the colleges of the Society of Jesus, where philosophy and theology studies were cultivated

1773-1824: For three centuries, the professors of the Society of Jesus led the Roman College with great merit and recognition. After the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Clement XIV in 1773, the Apostolic See decided to entrust the Roman College to the diocesan clergy. The Society of Jesus was restored by Pius VII in 1814, but the Roman College was not returned to the Society of Jesus until 1824, when Leo XII entrusted it to the Society of Jesus and generously renewed the granting of all the rights and privileges that had been granted to the College before its suppression.

1873: Pius IX orders the university to officially adopt the name Pontifical Gregorian University instead of Collegio Romano. In the last century, the Pontifical University needed a larger and more dignified seat, which, at the request of Pius XI, was built near the Colle del Quirinale in Piazza della Pilotta and solemnly inaugurated on 6 November 1930, expressly granted special status in the Lateran Treaties as the number of students and the variety of schools, institutes and faculties increased.

School for Leadership and Management

Around half of the students at the Leadership & Management School of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome come from Africa, many of them from villages and small communities. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof Dr Peter Lah, will integrate the relevant management levels of the Smart Village project (anti-corruption, project management, human resources management, sustainable economic management, social attention to local conditions, etc.) into the tasks of the Gregorian students and encourage them to support the local projects on the ground, in particular to perfect the dossiers.

2.4 Technical and economic development

Nkemnkia Community Development Foundation (NCDIF Roma)

Nkemnkia Community Development Empowerment International Foundation (NCDEIF), a non-profit Italian-Cameroonian foundation, is recognised by various African authorities (Cameroon le 9 January 2017, Burkina Fasole le 22 juin 2020, Cote D'Ivoire le 13 juillet 2021, Mali le 01 Sep, 2021, Republica Centro Africana le 13 Septembre 2021, Tchad le 30 Septembre 2023, Guinea Bissau le 17.8.2023. In preparation for the opening of a branch of the Foundation: Uganda, Kenya, Congo DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar, Gabon, Sierra Lyon, Benin, Guinea Conakry, Egypt, Tunisia and Nigeria).

Together with its partners, the foundation is implementing the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and the “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”. For example, in collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA), it is planning to connect and network Africa via satellite in order to bridge the digital divide that currently exists between the African continent and the rest of the industrialised world in a way that benefits everyone involved and no longer exploits them. All this is done within the framework of a global strategic partnership involving not only the governments concerned, but also other private partners and other stakeholders. Other projects to promote the economy and the common good include the industrialisation of the agricultural sector, livestock farming, the energy sector, the development of ICT for education, teaching and development, telecommunications and earth observation, health and public health, schools—education, cultural exchange and pre-vocational training, tourism and hospitality, urbanisation and infrastructure—transport and drinking water.

From 2023, the NCDEIF Foundation was invited to be part of the SDG Labs Sustainable Development Laboratory and to participate in the World Economic Forum in Davos. In November 2023, the Boston Global Forum BGF and the Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding—Collaboration Agreement (MOU).

Prof Dr Dr Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia is President of the Nkemnkia Community Development Empowerment International Foundation. He was born in Cameroon and studied Philosophy (PhD) and Sacred Theology (PhD) at the Pontifical Lateran University (P.U.L.) in Vatican City. Master in Electronics:—Electronic Physicist—Technicien Electronicien in 1988 at the University of LIEGE—BELGIQUE (CIFOR). Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical Lateran University: Courses: History of African Philosophy. African Thought and Religion; Socialisation of Politics in Africa—at the Chair of Cardinal Bernardin Gantin. Professor of: Traditional Religions of Sub-Saharan Africa presso/at ISSR Toscana Istituto Superiore di Scienze Religiose della Toscana—Italy—2020—2022 (ongoing). Chairman of the Scientific Committee of the CRA/SGI—Centre for Relations with Africa of the Italian Geographical Society (2021 sq ongoing). Member of the Centre for Interreligious Dialogue—Focolare Movement (ongoing). Honorary Senator of the UNASDG. Former Director of the Department of Human and Social Sciences—International Research Area—Interdisciplinary Studies on the Development of African Culture (Faculty of Arts Pul). 2011—2021 Former Director of the Chair “Cardinal Bernardin Gantin”—Political Socialisation in Africa of the Pontifical Lateran University (Faculty of Philosophy 2013—2017). Participation in the Vatican City Synod of Bishops as supervisor for translators and translations (1994—2010). Former member of the Italian Ecclesiastical Committee

for the Reduction of Foreign Debt of Poor Countries (appointed by the Presidency of the Italian Bishops' Conference).

3 Literature

Vogt, Matthias Theodor (2023): Elements of *women's socioeconomics in Cameroon* | *Elements of women's socioeconomics in Cameroon*. In: Matthias Theodor Vogt, Esperance Cadé Pérez Mekem, Aimée Nguemtchueng, Konang Henri Djogue, Urszula Lisowska, Isidore Agbanero, Kamil Zągoršek, Greta Cwikla, Franziska Müller, Joanna Bär, Nadine Kirstein, Jenny Neumann, Bertram Zitscher: *Kamerun mit den Augen von tausend Frauen* | *Le Cameroun aux yeux de mille femmes* | *Cameroon in the Eyes of a Thousand Women* | *Kamerun oczami tysiąca kobiet*. Institute for Cultural Infrastructure Saxony, Chemnitz University of Technology, University of Pécs 2023 (pp 191-244; 303-357).
<https://pea.lib.pte.hu/handle/pea/44351>).