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SOCIAL PROTECTION

Why Europe is not
a convincing global
leader anymore

FOOD

What difference
guinea pigs might
make in Africa

CENTRAL ASIA

Governments do
not respect human
rights

An aerial photograph of a densely populated city, likely in South America, showing a cable car system. Two red and black cable cars are suspended from a cable, moving over the city. The buildings are small and packed closely together. The sky is clear and blue.

Transport infrastructure

Monitor

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FOCUS

Transport infrastructure

Train to nowhere

An ambitious new railway project will link the Kenyan port town of Mombasa to Uganda and other countries. Critics complain about poor planning, low profitability and high debt due to Chinese loans. Proponents see economic opportunities, as journalist Alphonce Shiundu writes.

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Indispensable air traffic

South Sudan has few roads and is exposed to recurring violence. Those who can afford to do so use airplanes. They see no alternative, reports journalist Parach Mach.

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Tough competition

Cotonou's port is the engine of Benin's economy. To a large extent, it serves Nigerian clients and must therefore pay attention to infrastructure projects in the neighbouring country. Karim Okanla, a freelance author, assesses matters.

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Up in the air

Many Latin American agglomerations have steep slopes where disadvantaged communities live. Cableways have been set up in several of them. Most of these projects were successful, but some people find fault with them, as Julia Jaroschewski, a German foreign correspondent, elaborates.

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Cleaner air, less traffic

Around the world, car traffic has increased fast, threatening the health of human beings and the environment. Nicholas Hollmann, an urban planning expert, argues that pedestrians and cyclists deserve appropriate infrastructure. The Indian journalist Aditi Roy Ghatak went to Beijing and was impressed by the comparatively healthy air, which results from policymakers' transport planning among other things.

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To-do list

Traffic accidents kill far too many people in developing countries. Experts from the WHO and other institutions demand policy changes. Katja Dombrowski of D+C/E+Z has reviewed pertinent publications. Freelance author Floreana Miesen summarises demands made by the international advocacy group Sustainable Mobility for All.

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Lifelines

Human beings have the urge to be mobile, not least because mobility allows them to participate in social and economic life. People's standards of living depend on their ability to move around. Transport infrastructure is therefore a public good, and its importance it is particularly evident where it hardly exists – for instance in remote regions of developing countries and emerging markets. Some villages are not linked to the outside world – or depend on dirt roads that are impassable in the rainy season.

Cities, by contrast, tend to have infrastructure, though the quality differs dramatically. Every city has streets, but it matters whether rail and bus systems are available and to what extent they reach surrounding areas. And since non-motorised traffic enhances mobility too, sidewalks and bicycle lanes are needed.

Only about three percent of humanity uses airplanes, and owning a car remains a dream for the vast majority. People's mobility depends on their options, and the options reflect society's structure. Individual freedom results from public policy. The building of roads creates new traffic. And that is true of other kinds of new infrastructure, including new train lines, ports or airports. More traffic is created about intentionally because it drives trade and stimulates economies. Without the port of Cotonou, the economy of Benin would be 40% smaller, for example.

On the other hand, the extension of transport infrastructure causes serious problems. People are displaced when new highways or container ports are built. Environmental destruction can be brutal. Most cars, trucks, ships, trains and airplanes are powered by fossil fuels, so they pollute the air and contribute to the climate crisis. Transport accounts for about one quarter of global carbon emissions, with road traffic alone accounting for 18%.

Railways cause comparatively low per-capita emissions, and they can, at least in theory, be powered by renewables. Switching from road traffic to trains serves climate protection, reduces congestion and is therefore more sustainable. For the switch to happen, road and rail infrastructure must be linked intelligently.

Traffic accidents are among the most common causes of death worldwide. Things are particularly bad in developing countries where roads are in a poor condition, planning tends to be inadequate and safety regulations either do not exist or are not enforced. Such rules matter, and infrastructure must be built according to them.

The steam engine was invented in the late 18th century and the internal combustion engine followed 100 years later. They completely transformed the transport sector, facilitating globalisation as well as unprecedented individual mobility. Today, the great challenge is to give as many people as possible access to transport infrastructure, but at the same time ensure that all systems are sustainable. Making that happen is part of the 11th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). The established donor governments have been involved in related matters for a long time. The results were mixed. Unintended consequences included social hardship, environmental destruction and governments' over-indebtedness. Now China has become a global engine of building international transport infrastructure. Such engagement is welcome – to the extent, of course, that the dangerous pitfalls are avoided.

► You'll find all contributions of our focus section plus related ones on our website – they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.



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Photos: Jar David/picture-alliance/ABACA; Brigitte Meass

Debate



Leading the way

The UN climate summit in Madrid did not deliver results in December. Once again, science-denying governments held up the international community. In the eyes of Saleemul Huq, a Bangladeshi scholar, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has failed. Among the prosperous nations, only European ones are expressing meaningful ambitions.

PAGE 10

Tribune



Guinea pigs for Africa

In Latin America, guinea pigs contribute to people's protein intake. It would make sense to systematically breed them in Africa as well, as some farmers are already doing. South-south cooperation helps to speed up the trend, argues Frank Odenthal, a German journalist.

PAGE 17

Nice rhetoric is not enough

The EU has been engaged in human-rights promotion in Central Asia for a long time. The results are unconvincing. One reason is that this world region is exposed to Russian and Chinese influence, but in the eyes of Hugh Williamson of Human Rights Watch the EU could – and should – act more assertively.

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INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Why brown envelopes are harmful

Digitalisation has shattered the business models of many mainstream media. It has also given rise to fake-news propaganda. On the upside, more people now have access to more sources of information than ever before. The future of quality journalism depends on providers developing new business models.

By Hans Dembowski

Some governments are currently undermining democracy, says Gilberto Scofield Jr. of the fact-checking newswire Agencia Lupa, which is based in Rio de Janeiro. Apart from Brazil, his own country, he mentions the USA, Venezuela, Turkey and Hungary. He worries about an “eco-system of misinformation”, with “extreme polarisation” and people’s “poor media literacy” compounding problems.

Amazonian forest fires are an example of how propaganda can distort the truth. Scofield finds it appalling that President Jair Bolsonaro has called for a new agency to create databases on the state of forests simply because he does not like the findings pro-

vided by existing government agencies. In the past, Brazil’s official forest assessments were considered trustworthy internationally, but the Bolsonaro administration rejects science and denies the climate crisis.

In such a setting, Scofield argues, news organisations must not simply strive for balanced reporting, which gives space to both sides in a debate. Instead, quality media must embark on a quest for truth. Fact checkers’ job, according to him, is “to make things clear”. He uses a metaphor: “If someone says it’s raining and another person says it’s dry, it’s not your job to quote them both. Your job, as a journalist and as a fact-checker, is to look out the damn window and find out which is true.”

Scofield warns that too many Brazilian media organisations have not paid attention to the truth properly in the past, dedicating themselves just to quote two sides of stories, which is why trust in them is eroding. With the emergence of social networks and the amount of information shared by them, people started to realise mainstream media typically support one side and only pretend to be impartial. One way they conceal their

bias is to include a short paragraph or two with diverging views in a long article.

Media independence has always been a sensitive issue, particularly in poor countries. An essential criterion is whether they do proper research, not only turning to more than one source, but actually picking the most relevant ones. Obviously, cash-strapped radio stations and newspapers will always struggle to provide high-quality journalism.

In sub-Saharan regions, for example, “brown envelopes” are common, as Sulemana Braimah of the non-governmental Media Foundation for West Africa reports. The term means that institutions or businesses that want to be covered pay journalists for attending their events. The point is that the authors are not paid by the media outlets they work for. Such content can clearly not be impartial.

Another typical challenge, according to Braimah, is that government advertising contributes about 70% to media houses’ revenues. Accordingly, criticising the government may lead to an advertising squeeze. “That is a big issue,” says Braimah. At the same time, he says news organisations must do a better job of serving their audiences and reporting what people want to know rather than what powerful interest groups want to see covered.

The role of the so-called 4th estate has always been a matter of controversy. Com-



Brazil's president is not interested in accurate assessments of rain-forest destruction's true extent.

plaints about media bias are nothing new. In advanced nations, however, professional standards used to serve as a safeguard to some extent. They developed as the result of intense competition of commercial media and public broadcasters such as the BBC in Britain. Many people understood that media that did not apply those standards, such as tabloid newspapers, were less trustworthy.

In recent years, however, the digital revolution has begun to shatter seemingly well-established conventions and institutions. That is so even in prosperous world regions. In many places today, there is only one local newspaper – or even none. News

is available free of charge on the internet. At the same time, fake news is spreading fast on social media. The less the public understands how the media work and what distinguishes quality journalism from mere propaganda, the easier it is for interest groups to manipulate public opinion. The poorer a country is, the worse things tend to be.

According to Carsten von Nahmen, the head of Deutsche Welle Akademie, digitalisation has changed the media for good. The downsides include the spread of misinformation and the destruction of business models. On the upside, he says, more people

have access to more sources of information than ever before, and more voices have the chance to be heard.

The good news is that new online business models are evolving (see box below). Some of the most interesting examples are in emerging markets and developing countries. Even in very challenging settings, some websites manage to build brands with reliable reporting and find support from growing communities.

LINK

Agencia Lupa:

<https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/>

If it works in Zimbabwe, it'll work anywhere

Innovative online publishers are paving the way towards new business models that facilitate independent quality journalism. Two interesting examples are Animal Político in Mexico and 263Chat in Zimbabwe.

Tania Montalvo runs the independent news website Animal Político in Mexico City. She says it is important not to depend on a single revenue source. Though access to the main website is free, Animal Político has begun to collect money from its audience. People can become paying “members” for example, and they then get access to important stories a few hours before others do. She reports that this approach is more effective than crowd sourcing, because it makes people feel “that they are part of the project”. In Montalvo’s experience, it is possible to use quality journalism to create a community. She points out that the user experience must be good, not least in the sense of items being easy to read.

To attract more people and generate extra revenues, Animal Político has started additional activities. One example is Animal Gourmet, a website dedicated to food. Moreover, the parent company has begun to produce videos for clients. Two persons are busy producing such “commercial content,” Montalvo reports.

Montalvo discussed her approach at the annual conference of FOME (Forum Media and Development), an informal network of German development agencies involved in me-

dia affairs. DW Akademie and Konrad Adenauer Foundation hosted it in November in Bonn. Her panel included Nigel Mugamu from Zimbabwe, who confirmed her message of journalistic independence depending on sufficient – and sufficiently diverse – revenue streams.

Seven years ago, Mugamu set up the online publishing company 263Chat. His team now includes 17 persons, produces news items every day and systematically uses social media such as WhatsApp, twitter and Facebook to spread information. 263Chat is a for-profit organisation, Mugamu points out. As a trained accountant, he is used to processing business figures. He insists that it would not make sense to charge users

in a poor country, so he relies on five other revenue streams, including advertising and providing graphics services for clients. Mugamu says his work is “character building,” especially in view of Zimbabwe’s painfully high inflation. He is forced to improvise and discover new ways to make money continuously. The good news is that 263Chat is viable in very difficult circumstances. In his eyes, that proves that independent journalism is feasible elsewhere as well.

Animal Político and 263Chat have several things in common. Most important is probably their emphasis on using the brand to build a community. Mugamu considers it important to engage the audience daily. “The key is to listen,” he says. Unless journalists know what their audience wants, they will be unable to deliver that kind of content. dem

LINKS

Animal Politico:

<https://www.animalpolitico.com/>

263Chat:

<https://www.263chat.com/>

FOME conference documentation:

<https://fome.info/symposium-2019-2>



263Chat uses twitter to reach out to its audience.

SOUTH AFRICA

Foreign workers built prosperity

South Africa is the continent's most important migrant destination. For centuries, migration has been shaping society, the education system, religion, culture and especially the labour market.

By Dagmar Wolf

Europe is by no means the only destination African migrants want to get to. In fact, there is a lot of intra-African migration, including between the continent's different regions. From all over Africa – and even beyond it – people have been moving to the continent's southern tip for a very long time. In her recently published book on people migrating to South Africa and starting there anew, Rita Schäfer, a social anthropologist, assesses what difference they have made.

The Dutch were the first Europeans to settle in the Cape region in 1652. They set up a supply station on behalf of the Dutch United East India Company. In order to provide food to their sailors, who worked for the profitable spice trade with India, they brought slaves from the coasts of the Indian Ocean and from their colonial territory, which is now Indonesia.

Shortly after the Dutch, numerous religiously persecuted Huguenots settled in today's South Africa. They had been forced to flee from France. Schäfer reports that they, too, had slaves and forced labourers working in wine and fruit cultivation.

Sexualised violence against the farm workers was widespread. The farms became a microcosm in which the racist social order of South Africa developed over generations, states Schäfer.

She points out that economic policy-making and the control of migration went hand in hand throughout history. Agriculture and mining in particular needed workers. Contract workers from India were forced to labour on sugar-cane plantations. Chinese contract workers were employed in the dangerous gold mines of the Witwatersrand. Migrants from Mozambique and Lesotho, moreover, mined gold and coal. From China and India, traders arrived with their families, hoping for a better life.

They all struggled in harsh conditions, but they laid the foundation for South Africa's rapid industrialisation. Over and over again, there were protests against brutal working conditions. Schäfer points out how

trade unions denounced hardships in the mining industry and successfully organised strikes. By the end of the 19th century, the Indian lawyer Mahatma Gandhi, who worked in South Africa at the time, organised non-violent protests against discriminatory laws in South Africa. He later became world famous as the leader of India's independence struggle. It was in South Africa, however, that he developed his concept of civil disobedience.

During the Apartheid regime (1948 to 1994), white South Africans claimed supremacy over all other races. According to Schäfer, the regime was keen on state control of all population groups. Residential areas were planned and organised according to people's skin colour and ancestry. Racist laws and strict regulations regulated the lives of the entire non-white population. This policy affected immigrant groups as well as indigenous black population. During Apartheid, more than 3.5 million people were forcibly resettled and expropriated by brute force. The economic development and the prosperity of the country, however, basically resulted from the hard work of contract labourers and immigrants, as Schäfer emphasises.

The political turning point came in 1994 with the end of Apartheid. According to Schäfer, South Africans and immigrants alike had high hopes for the new constitution that was adopted under President Nelson Mandela. Many people from numerous different countries, including war-torn Mozambique and economically mismanaged Zimbabwe, came in search of new livelihoods in the new, majority-rule order.

Today, South Africa is called the "rainbow nation" because of its many ethnic groups. Unfortunately, living together is not always as harmonious as hoped. As in many other places around the world, scapegoating and xenophobic violence all too often target minorities when people are dissatisfied with poor infrastructure or failed policymaking.

REFERENCE

Schäfer, R., 2019: Migration und Neuanfang in Südafrika. Geschichte und Gegenwart von Einwanderung, Asyl und Wanderarbeit. (Migration and new beginning in South Africa. Past and present of immigration, asylum and migrant labour – in German only). Frankfurt a.M., Brandes & Apsel.



Protest march against xenophobia in Johannesburg, South Africa in March 2017.

LAND DEGRADATION

Highland challenges

Soil degradation is increasingly threatening people's food security in rural mountain regions. Women in particular are at risk. Sustainable concepts are urgently needed to balance economic development with environmental protection.

By Floreana Miesen

Mountain regions matter. They provide livelihoods to people living there as well as vital ecosystem services to lowlands. Indeed, about half of the world population depends on water resources and even food from mountain areas. It is thus alarming that rural mountain regions are increasingly suffering environmental decline and soil degradation. A study jointly published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) provides evidence.

Food security is particularly at risk in mountain regions. Many mountain dwellers live in remote areas where basic services are scarce and infrastructure is poor. The nearest market may well be a three or four hours' drive away – and that is true of educational and health facilities as well.

Mountain farming is done in fragile ecosystems. Soils are typically of poor quality and exposed to extreme weather conditions. Especially during winter or the wet season, large quantities of snow and extensive flooding may undermine agricultural efforts. In many places, changing land use and violent conflict aggravate the situation.

The authors warn that soil degradation is driven by profit interests that do not take into account environmental impacts. Far too often, agriculture is geared to high yields with no regard for sustainability. As a result, soil quality is deteriorating fast in many mountain regions.

Protecting the environment, combating soil degradation and adapting to climate change are imperative, the study insists. Organic carbon stocks in the soil must be regenerated and mountain ecosystems pre-

served. That would require government action, but serve the protection of biodiversity and safeguard people's standards of living. Improving agricultural valuechains could drive economic development.

In East Africa, decreasing food security in rural mountain areas is particularly alarming, according to the study. Rapid

in particular because they tend to still depend heavily on natural resources in daily household management. Soil degradation is reducing their access to fertile land. The less fertile plots become, the more labour-intensive the production of staple food will be. Such downward spirals may have a negative impact on the economic opportunities of women. Moreover, girls' educational opportunities will suffer too if they are forced to do more farmwork instead of going to school.

The authors also call for regular and systematic collection and publication of data on food security and soil degrada-



Food security is particularly at risk in East Africa's mountainous regions – women in Kenya's Machakos region are affected.

soil degradation and the enormous population growth are endangering agricultural production. The population of East Africa has increased by almost 1.5% in a mere five years, growing much faster than the world average, the UN experts state.

They demand that the rights of rural women must be ensured and natural resources must be protected. Otherwise, neither environmental nor economic sustainability will be possible. Women matter

in mountain regions. Solid evidence is needed to draft effective poverty-reduction strategies and environmental protection programmes.

LINK

FAO and UNCCD, 2019: Vulnerability to food insecurity in mountain regions. Land degradation and other stressors.

http://catalogue.unccd.int/1249_Mountains_GM_CA6015EN.pdf

Taking possession

In war-ravaged South Sudan, disputes over land ownership are adding to the tensions already afflicting the country. A stable system of land tenure seems far out of reach.

The 2005 peace agreement that ultimately led to South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011 did not resolve the dichotomy between the two countries' land tenure systems. That difference has contributed to a spate of land-grabbing in South Sudan and a backlog of ownership disputes.

"In Sudan, private property reform governs land ownership rights, but in South Sudan customary rules prevail," says Moses Maal, head of land surveying in South Sudan's Ministry of Land and Housing. Customary rule means that active occupation or use of a piece of land is the main evidence of ownership. Under this system, traditional rules and local leaders determine ownership rights. That creates a potential clash between parallel systems.

Such clashes are occurring all across the country, says Maal, whose office has a backlog of 13,000 cases involving land disputes. He says the government should set up a system of local land courts to handle these disputes and prevent further conflict. "In the capital Juba, we have a problem between locals and outsiders," Maal says. In the countryside, "some powerful people are grabbing native land. A lack of proper land policies is to blame."

The extended absences of many traditional farmers who fled from South

Sudan's long period of violence made matters worse. South Sudan's civil war erupted in December 2013 and has killed more than 10,000 people. It also caused over 4 million people to flee, according to the UN. Of these, more than 2 million fled to neighbouring Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Following a September 2018 peace agreement, many of those refugees returned home, only to find that their land had been taken over during their absence. According to Reech Malual, a human-rights activist based in Juba, "the government has no rights to own the land but manages it on behalf of owners. This fuels land-grabbing because people who can't make legitimate investments use other means."

When land grabs occur, that system is turned on its head. Moreover, in such circumstances land use can change in harmful ways. For example, shepherds may bring livestock to graze on land that was previously used to raise crops, thereby destroying crop fields.

Since 2014, farmers in South Sudan's Equatoria region have complained about the arrival of shepherds and livestock on their land. They have come to regard the newly arrived herders as threats to their livelihoods – and the feeling is mutual.

According to Sule Amari, a local chief in Pageri County, about 70 miles from the capital, shepherds armed with guns have been occupying farmlands, endangering crops and threatening food supplies. "Land is a question of life and death for many youths," Amari explains. "Local chiefs have been asking our youths to refrain from violence. But the herders have to leave. This is the only way for us to co-exist."

In 2017, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit ordered herders from other states who graze their animals in parts of Equatoria to return home. But talks to resolve such impasses have shown little sign of progress, creating fertile ground for more disputes to grow.



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Scholarships for Conference Visit,
Writing Workshop and One-to-One
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JUMP – to The Hague

In connection with the EADI/ISS General Conference 2020 „Solidarity, Peace and Social Justice“, to be held from 29 June to 2 July 2020 at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, PhD and early career researchers from the Global South are invited to apply for the JUMP Journal Mentoring Programme. EADI is the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes.

JUMP offers the opportunity to work closely with an experienced scholar from the same field of interest, in order to prepare a paper for submission to the European Journal of Development Research (EJDR) or any other scientific journal. A one-day

writing workshop at the conference will kick off the programme. Conference fees, travel and accommodation expenses of the mentees are covered by the programme. The call is open until **20 January 2020**.

Ideally, JUMP applicants have submitted an abstract to either one of the conference panels (abstract submission deadline is 6 January 2020), or the 17th ISS Development Dialogue being held alongside the conference. The Development Dialogue is an annual ISS conference, organised by and for PhD researchers and young scholars in development studies. The related call for abstracts is still open until 15 January. Applications independent from these two events are welcome too.

www.eadi.org/gc/2020

www.eadi.org/jump

CLIMATE POLICY

The way forward

The UN climate summit in Madrid has not delivered results. The world community was once again held up by science-denying governments. Among rich nations, only European ones are still spelling out meaningful ambitions. The developing world cannot rely on the multilateral system to solve the problems, argues our author from Bangladesh, but the fight for sustainability must go on.

By Saleemul Huq

The delegations from the USA, Australia and Brazil – three countries ravaged by terrible forest fires this year – were particularly destructive in Madrid, allowing others, in-

has evidently failed. That said, it was better not to take decisions in Madrid than to conclude bad deals that those who deny science might accept.

The empirical facts are unequivocal. Humanity is heading for disaster. The crisis is escalating faster than predicted. If emission trends are not reversed dramatically in the next ten years, the climate crisis will spin out of control, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned (see Mojib Latif in Debate section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/11).

The evidence keeps becoming more conclusive – whether it concerns the state of oceans (see Floreana Miesen in Moni-

of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/09). Nonetheless, reckless governments still prioritise fossil fuel interests. Such action is likely to be considered a crime against humanity in the not so distant future.

People are paying attention. In 2019, school kids went on climate strikes all over the world. A new movement called Extinction Rebellion has launched civil-disobedience campaigns internationally. While media attention tends to be on rich countries, people in the poorer parts of the world are very concerned too. “In my country, most people depend on their farms and crops for survival,” says Ugandan youth activist Vanessa Nakate. “But with all these droughts and floods, people are left with no hope for the future.”

Some policymakers respond to public pressure. In the gloom of the Madrid conference, the EU’s promise of a Green Deal offered a rare ray of hope. It is ambitious and makes sense (see box next page). Apparently, EU leaders were impressed by the masses of teenagers who were mobilised by Greta Thunberg, their Swedish peer. The new EU promises set an example for what other advanced economies must do.

It would have been even better if the EU had announced the new policy a few months earlier in order to give the climate summit momentum. As it happened, the EU’s heads of state and government only confirmed the new policy shortly before the end of the climate conference. Since the new European Commission only assumed office at the beginning of December, it cannot be blamed for the timing. It is clear however, that implementation of the new policy must now happen fast.

If the EU fulfils its promises, it will be doing the world a big service. People in developing countries need ambitious partners in the rich world. In the past, however, EU rhetoric on climate matters was often better than EU action. That is particularly true in Germany, where the federal government is behind its own carbon-reduction schedule and so far has only taken half-hearted measures to accelerate action.

The challenges are huge, not least because the UNFCCC process is in total disarray. The EU must go ahead without guarantees that other prosperous world regions will follow. The situation may be a bit better at the following summit next year which will take place shortly after the US elections. If



Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate during a side-event at the climate summit in Madrid.

cluding Canada and Japan, to hide behind them. Humanity is headed towards disaster, but we cannot rely on multilateral action to stop or reverse the trend. The UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change)

tor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/11), the erosion of biodiversity (see Theresa Krininger in Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07) or the impacts of land use (see Katja Dombrowski in Monitor section

– a big if – Donald Trump is not re-elected, the dynamics will be different. He would still be in office, but quite obviously a lame duck. The next president would probably be a Democrat who would reverse the decision to quit the Paris Agreement and endorse Green New Deal proposals in the USA. They point in a similar direction as the policy that the EU has just adopted.

It is noteworthy that, in spite of Brexit, Britain's conservative government aligned with the EU rather than the USA in Madrid. It will host next year's UNFCCC summit in Glasgow. Britain's stance is ambiguous: on the one hand, it has promised it will not change its rather progressive climate policy, but on the other, some of its leaders promote the kind of deregulation agenda that typically reduces the scope for environmental protection. The recent elections have boosted the power of Prime Minister Boris Johnson. His majority is now so strong that he can basically do what he wants.

EU leaders have ample reason not to trust Johnson, so negotiations about future EU-UK relations will be difficult. Nonethe-

less, they would do well to offer a generous climate package. Cooperating on the transition to sustainability is clearly preferable to starting a regulatory race to the bottom.

Market dynamics may actually support such an approach. Yes, it is true that neoliberal market-orthodoxy has often thwarted progressive action in the past. On the other hand, private-sector investors are increasingly becoming climate aware. They have been shying away from coal for some time and are now beginning to back off from oil and gas as well. They know that companies will eventually be held accountable for the damage they do. Most recently, Goldman Sachs has announced it will not finance Arctic drilling.

Central bankers, to some extent, are driving this trend. For good reason, they have begun to consider the macroeconomic risks that result from the climate crisis. In rather depressing times, it may be a good omen that the Bank of England has been a pioneer in this debate and that Christine Lagarde, the new president of the European Central Bank, is now promoting the cause.

The European Investment Bank, an EU institution, similarly deserves praise for its recent decision to phase out investments in these fossil energies by the end of 2021. Private-sector investors pay attention to that kind of signalling.

We cannot expect the UNFCCC to solve our climate problems. Trying to prevent the climate catastrophe feels like swimming against the tide. There is no alternative but to keep on fighting. Even if mass protests do not convince every reckless government, they are not futile. Making private-sector investors pay attention to science is important too.



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More important than landing on the moon

Led by Ursula von der Leyen, the new European Commission has adopted an ambitious new climate policy in December. It is called the European Green Deal. The Commission wants the EU to become climate neutral by 2050, which will require a comprehensive transformation to sustainability. Changes are needed in the energy sector, industry, transport and agriculture. The use of fossil fuels must be phased out.

Von der Leyen has likened the project to the landing on the moon. The governments of the member countries have endorsed the policy at an EU summit, though Poland was given several more months un-

til summer to declare its consent. Climate considerations will figure in trade, for example, when the EU negotiates new agreements. The Commission is also considering the introduction of a carbon tax on imports from countries that do not enforce stringent climate protection. Moreover, the Commission has pledged support geared to making African and Balkan economies sustainable.

The interim target for 2030 is to reduce the EU's carbon emissions to at least 50% below 1990 levels. The Commission has asked member countries to scale up their climate policies accordingly. The energy sector will be a focus of

action. In the future, electric power is to be mostly generated from renewable sources. Manufacturing industries in particular are expected to switch to renewables. Energy efficiency is another core issue.

In agriculture and forestry, targets are ambitious too. The use of chemical pesticides is to be halved by 2030. Application of fertilisers and antibiotics on farms is to decline as well. The Commission wants existing forests to be protected and promotes forestation. Cities are to become greener due to the planting of thousands of trees. In the transport sector, the EU is in favour of e-mobility and has pledged to install at least 1 million recharging stations for e-vehicles. Air traffic is to be reduced, and the Commission wants higher prices for fossil fuels to contribute to making that happen.

Implementing the Green Deal will be expensive. The Commission reckons that additional investments worth an annual €260 billion are needed, so private as well as public money must be mobilised. It has declared that one instrument to stimulate investments will be low interest-rate lending by the European Investment Bank.

The Commission has declared that European regions facing particular difficulties, for example because they depend on fossil fuels, will get financial support. A Just Transition Mechanism with €100 billion will be established for this purpose. D+C/E+Z

LINK

European Green Deal:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

GOVERNANCE

Restricted freedom

People in Benin wonder what exactly EU Ambassador Oliver Nette did to merit a summary dismissal from the country in late November. The government speaks of “serious interference” in internal affairs. The sad truth is that the country has been in political crisis ever since flawed parliamentary elections were held in April. Today, every single member of the new parliament is a supporter of President Patrice Talon.

By Karim Okanla

Authorities in Cotonou are getting tough on foreign diplomats who dare to cross their “red lines”. In a press briefing a couple of weeks ago, Alain Orunla, the government spokesperson, said that officers like Nette

and insisted that the EU envoy had “even meddled in activities that we consider to be subversive”. At the same time, the spokesperson pointed out that Benin was interested in good relations and cooperation with the EU, so it was hoped that the EU would soon send a new diplomat to head its mission in Benin.

There was public outcry in Benin. People wanted to know what exactly Nette had done wrong. The public is aware of the EU being one of Benin’s major foreign donors – which matters, because the country largely depends on official development assistance. Issues of governance, moreover, are of great relevance in the aid context.

Following the public discontent, Aurélien Agbénonci, the minister of foreign affairs and cooperation, tried to water down

International points out that the authorities restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The general impression is that the rule of law is weakening.

The obvious truth is that Oliver Nette, during his brief mission to Benin, held regular meetings with members of civil-society organisations, opposition parties, media professionals, opinion and religious leaders. In compliance with international norms of governance, he believed that these entities should play an important role in a young democracy like Benin. According to reliable sources, Nette was outspoken about the problematic elections of April (see my essay in Tribune section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/07). Such statements made behind closed doors were probably very much in line with what members of Benin’s opposition say. In their eyes, the current National Assembly lacks legitimacy, so they demand a re-run of the parliamentary election.

It seems likely that the government felt uncomfortable with Nette witnessing the gradual decline of Benin’s democracy. Today, all 83 members of parliament are fully beholden to President Talon. A few weeks ago, they unanimously amended the constitution in just 24 hours, without consulting the public at all. Among other things, terms limits were introduced for members of parliament, and the position of a vice-president was created. However, the changes did nothing to address the grievances of the opposition. Some groups now want to mobilise support internationally and hope foreign governments will put pressure on the Talon administration. If stringent sanctions were imposed, they believe, the political situation might improve.

Not everyone appreciates this strategy, however. Benin is a low-income country that needs to roll back widespread poverty, and sanctions are likely to cause additional hardship. Those currently in power, of course, see things in yet a different light. They speak of “a desperate attempt to bring down the government” and “betrayal of the fatherland”. Such talk, needless to say, is merely empty populist rhetoric to opposition leaders.



Increasingly controversial: President Patrice Talon speaking in Cotonou this year.

must demonstrate courtesy towards the host country. He argued that African diplomats do so in western countries and added: “We expect the same attitude from the European Union ambassador.”

Orunla pointed out that, upon arrival in Benin two years ago, Nette stated that political activism would top his priority list,

his government’s harsh rhetoric. He spoke of “withdrawal of accreditation” rather than summary expulsion. But for many Beninese, this game of semantics doesn’t hold water.

The political context matters too. The country is in a profound crisis since parliamentary elections from which opposition parties were excluded in April. Amnesty



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MASS PROTESTS

Demanding peace and dignity

Recent social unrest was triggered by rather different events in Chile and Bolivia. Nonetheless, the protests are driven by the same grievances: social exclusion, excessive inequality and neglect of fundamental human rights.

By Katie Cashman

The Chilean protests started with a group of students evading the metro-fare increase in Santiago on 14 October. Across the country, protesters took to the streets to denounce rising income inequality and high cost of living. Decades of market-orthodox policies have made public transport, health care and education unaffordable for masses of Chileans who live on low wages or tiny pensions.

Protesters began overtaking metro stations and schools, barricading and blocking major roads, marching, chanting, boycotting and going on strike. Government buildings, churches and businesses were vandalised. Chile came to a standstill amidst the unrest. On 19 October, President Sebastián Piñera, who belongs to the country's rich elite, declared a state of emergency and called the military onto the streets. His claim that Chile was at war sparked widespread anger. In response, protestors shouted slogans like "we are not at war, we are united".

In Bolivia, protests started when three-term president Evo Morales was accused of electoral fraud to maintain his political power in the election of 20 October. The background is confusing. Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president had been in office since 2006 and his inclusive policies stabilised the polity. Nonetheless, he certainly deserves criticism. He ran for office once more even though the constitution he himself had introduced ruled out another consecutive term as head of state. Against his wishes, Bolivia's people had not changed that rule in a referendum. In the end, Bolivia's Supreme Court ruled that he had an undeniable human right to be a candidate. Quite evidently, Morales was evading a democratic rule that many nations observe and which leaders with authoritarian leanings have a pattern of circumventing.

At the same time, Morales was the clear frontrunner in the first round of the election. Fraud became evident when media coverage of the vote count was interrupted. When it resumed, his share had suddenly risen to a level that would have made a second round of voting unnecessary. However, he might well have won that second round.

Put under pressure by protests and admonished by the military, Morales resigned on 10 November. To many observers, the

way things evolved looked very much like a military coup. Morales fled the country, and none of his parties' top-elected officials could succeed him, as would have been the norm. Instead, Jeanine Áñez, a right-wing opposition senator, declared herself the interim president. She did not manage to be confirmed in office according to constitutional rules, but she obviously enjoys the support of the security forces. People are now protesting against her – and she ordered the military to repress them. She even issued a decree that exempted them from criminal responsibility. This decision too was reminiscent of dictatorship, but was later rescinded.

In Chile and Bolivia, the police and military have employed teargas, water cannons and even shotguns. When this comment was finalised in early December, 23 Bolivians and 19 Chileans had died. More than 600 Bolivians and 2,000 Chileans were detained. Over 200 Chileans had lost eyesight due to pellet shots, and bandaged eyes had become a symbol of human-rights activism.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN commissioner for human rights and a former Chilean president, has called on both Piñera and Áñez's governments to respond to the civil unrest sensitively and in accordance with international norms. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International similarly expressed concern.

In both countries, the protests are now about social inclusion, deeper democracy and human rights. People demand the right to free and fair elections. They want to live in dignity and peace. They reject gender-based violence, the marginalisation of indigenous people and high income inequality.

In the meantime, Piñera has promised Chile will get a new constitution. If things go well – a big if – his nation will be able to vote for fundamental change in 2020. In Bolivia, Áñez has promised elections. However, it is not clear who will lead Morales' left-of-centre party and even less clear that the elections will be fair and free.



Bandaged eyes have become a symbol of human-rights activism in Chile.

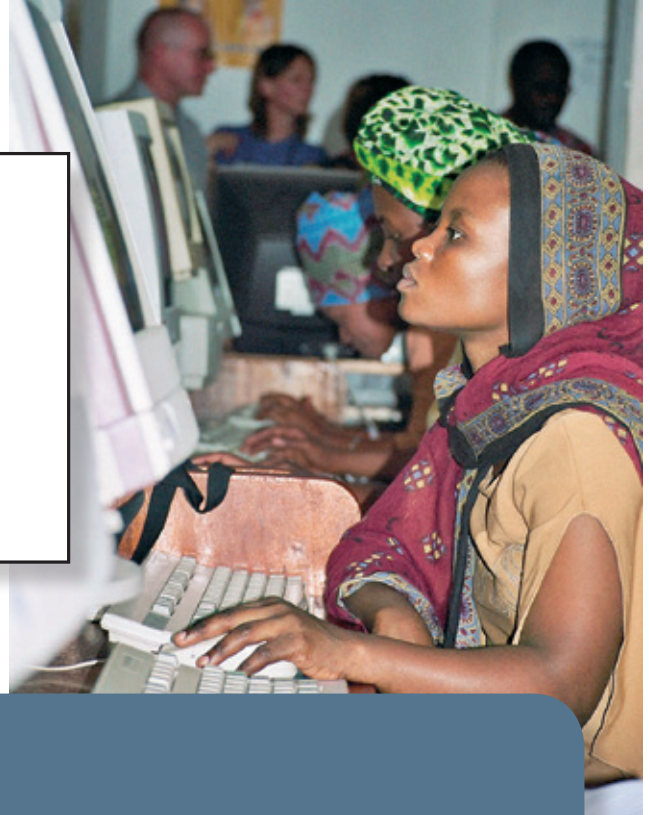


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SOCIAL PROTECTION

No longer convincing trendsetter

European countries have pioneered welfare-state policies. For a long time, they seemed to offer paradigms of social protection, public services and upward mobility. After four decades of social-spending cuts, however, the EU is not a leader in the area of policy-making. It actually does not make much sense to speak of the “European social model” anymore.

By Praveen Jha

In 500 years of capitalist history, humanity has witnessed colonialism, slavery and even genocide. Brutal exploitation normally went along with unprecedented productivity and, for some, prosperity. Things are a bit different in the most advanced economies where governmental welfare policies cushion off desperate poverty and, to some extent, reduce inequality. In the past 150 years, European governments were frontrunners in terms of introducing social-protection schemes for their peoples. They have been setting examples of what capitalism can achieve in the best case.

“European social model” (ESM) is a much used term, but it has not been defined precisely. Jacques Delors, the French socialist who headed the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, spoke of ESM often. His intention was to distinguish the identity of the emerging EU from other advanced capitalist regions. His rhetoric was a bit vague, but it was not pointless, given that European countries have a long history of safety-net policies. It is therefore not difficult to flag a couple of features of the ESM.

It is widely acknowledged that Otto von Bismarck’s innovative policies in the 1870s laid the foundation of the ESM. In view of fierce class struggle, he wanted to thwart the rising labour movement. He introduced unemployment benefits and a pension system to reduce the grievances that propelled it. His new “social insurances” relied on financial contributions from workers and capitalists. In the long run, these new institutions proved very successful (also see Hans Dembowski in Monitor section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2019/11).

While his policy did not thwart Germany’s Social Democrats as hoped, it contributed considerably to turning them into a mainstream, reformist force. It also helped to foster a sense of national identity in the German Reich that was only constituted in 1872 (see Markus Loewe in Focus section of D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/11). It is true that other north-western European countries had introduced piecemeal reforms before Bismarck, but in retrospect, it is clear that his approach amounted to a paradigm change. Other countries, including France and Italy copied his model.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia this trend picked up speed. European governments had to keep the “menace of socialism” at bay, so they broadened and deepened social protection. In Europe, citizenship increasingly included the right to public services, including health care, free school education and old-age pensions.

However, the ascendancy of what would be called the welfare state really took off after World War II. Countries in Europe’s north-western core and Italy witnessed remarkable social progress. Up to the early 1970s, several European countries built ever more inclusive welfare states and facilitated mass upward mobility. As a popular saying went, they enjoyed protection “from the cradle to the grave”. Nobody spoke of the ESM, but this was its prime era.

In 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which emphasise social inclusion. Arguably, this agenda is inspired by the ESM. The irony of the matter, however, is that this model has been eroding in Europe itself. Indeed, it has been under attack for about 40 years.

PARADIGM CHANGE

In the early 1980s, Margaret Thatcher, then Britain’s prime minister, rigorously slashed social spending. President Ronald Reagan took a similar approach in the USA. As social protection was more deeply entrenched in Britain, Thatcher’s animosity to the welfare system was arguably more important. Soon, other European governments were following suit. The new paradigm was free markets, and governments were no longer supposed to intervene in them.

Market orthodoxy became dominant all over the world. Guy Standing, a professor at the School of Oriental and African Stud-



“Accident in a factory” – wood engraving of 1889 inspired by Johann Bahr painting.



Gillets Jaunes protest in Toulouse in early 2019.

ies (SOAS) in London put it rather forcefully: “Globally social protection systems are in a mess ... the state has been cutting back on universalistic income support; social insurance is giving way to social assistance, with an array of poverty traps and unemployment traps; and enterprises of employment are cutting back on social benefits and services, at least for their workers” (Standing, 2007, p.28). Such developments were particularly noteworthy in Europe, the continent that pioneered social protection.

In Europe, things got even worse during the eurozone crisis from 2010 on. Austerity, cutbacks in social protection, increasing flexibilisation of labour markets hit hard large segments of citizens and workers. In February 2012, Mario Draghi, who was then the president of the European Central Bank, told the Wall Street Journal that the ESM was “gone”. Indeed, so-called structural reforms

had weakened every axis of social economic justice, and had torn some of them down.

The impacts varied across classes and regions. The OECD noted that the “lower income households have lost greater proportions of their incomes than the better off ... particularly in the hardest hit countries like Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain” (OECD, 2014, p. 22).

The countries of the EU’s north-western core region and Scandinavia, however, reduced spending less rigorously than some of their southern and eastern partners. Nonetheless, even in Germany, probably the most successful EU economy, people once again fear to be poor in old age.

By contrast, some non-European countries expanded social protection after the turn of the millennium. Under progressive governments, Brazil introduced Bolsa Família, South Africa launched a child-support grant, and India established the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee. Obamacare was the surprising and most unusual example of the USA acting in a socially progressive manner at a time when Europe was cutting social spending.

In terms of innovative policies, the EU is certainly not leading the field, though its members’ social spending still tends to be high. In western Europe, it amounts to more than a quarter of GDP, whereas it only amounts to not quite nine percent worldwide and not even five percent in Africa, Asia and the Pacific region on average.

As the EU is not wholeheartedly endorsing the ESM the way Delors did, it really does not make much sense to use the term anymore.

We are living in turbulent times. The global financial crisis, global heating and new trade wars show that market orthodoxy has failed. Social unrest is currently rocking Latin America as well as North Africa and the Middle East. It is evident that we need a new, global social contract in the spirit of the SDGs. Europe would be well advised to contribute to making that happen. After all, the Gillets Jaunes protests in France are, to a large extent, about regaining the kind of inclusion that was typical of the ESM. Moreover, it bears repetition that the rise of populism is linked to people’s growing feels of social deprivation.

LINKS

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What independence leaders found impressive

European welfare states influenced the narratives and policies in many developing countries, including those that gained independence after World War II. On the one hand, anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America were critical of their former political masters. On the other hand, the new inclusiveness

and social fairness that was evident in Europe looked inspiring.

Important independence leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana or Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, to name only three, were well versed in the evolution of Europe’s social-protection charters. These great

statesmen were determined to achieve something similar, fully aware of facing much greater challenges. Obviously, their countries struggled with greater poverty. Productivity, education levels, infrastructure – everything was poorer in the Third World, yet progressive discourses were never in short supply.

Of course, countries of the capitalist South still have much lower levels of social protection, with a few cases in Latin America and East Asia being better than most. Gener-

ally speaking, the gap between the countries of the South and the advanced capitalist regions continues to be wide – both in terms of what share of the people is covered and how much money is spent. As a rule of thumb, the GDP share of social spending is five times higher in western Europe than it is in Africa, Asia and the Pacific region.

Market-orthodoxy has triggered a race to the bottom everywhere. The European social model is no longer setting examples. pj



Cavies are sold for food at a market in Ecuador.

LIVESTOCK

Guinea pigs for Africa

Guinea pigs – domestic cavies – have been an important protein-rich food in Latin America since time immemorial. In Africa, however, cavy farming is very much in its infancy. Compared to other forms of livestock, cavies have numerous advantages. South-south cooperation helps to harness them.

By Frank Odenthal

Cavies are rodents – and a not-too-distant relative of rabbits. They live in both the pampas and the Andean mountains. Only the Amazon rainforest is beyond their comfort zone. Cavy meat is high in protein and contains lots of polyunsaturated fatty acids that are good for the heart.

In Ecuador and Peru, in particular, cavies are a popular and traditional food, found even on the menu at top restaurants in Quito and Lima. In some places, cavies

are also believed to have a medicinal value – useful in the treatment of cancer, for instance. However, there is no scientific evidence.

Cavies are easy to keep. They do not need much space – a small pen or cage will generally suffice. Alternatively, they can simply be allowed to range freely in a kitchen or room. They are shy animals and will not try to escape at the first opportunity. That is an important consideration when introducing livestock into a non-native environment.

Cavies are viewed with certain misgivings in Africa because invasive species can do great harm. Maize and sorghum harvests across the continent have been decimated, for example, by the armyworm imported from South America (see Humphrey Nkonde in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/04, Monitor). The real question, however, is whether

cavies should really be regarded as an invasive species in Africa? According to Brigitte Maass, an agricultural scientist who draws on decades of experience in international agricultural research in South America and East Africa, the answer is no. Cavies – she says – have been present in Africa for a long time.

How they were introduced to the continent is still a mystery. They were probably brought in by European missionaries. “It is exactly ten years ago that we discovered cavies in Eastern Congo,” Maass recalls. “By we, of course, I mean Europeans. The Africans have long been aware of their farming and commercial potential.”

EASY TO FEED

Perhaps the cavy’s biggest advantage as a livestock species is that it does not compete with humans for food. That is not the case with chickens, for instance, because the grain they are fed could also be used to feed humans. Cavies are not fussy eaters. They get the nourishment they need from grass and herbs, but will feed equally happily on kitchen waste. Another advantage of

cavies is that their manure makes excellent fertiliser. It is nitrogen-rich and also relatively dry, so it is lighter than manure from other animals and thus easier for farmers to transport and spread.

In Africa, a conservationist case can be made for cavies. They are an alternative to bushmeat (forest animals which are

to breed and rear, so marketing can be done fast and conveniently should a crisis arise. Some aid agencies have started distributing cavies to refugees and people in war zones. The idea is to help them get onto a “livestock ladder” to escape poverty.

In South Kivu Province in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ca-

num of 2 million cavies and Tanzania and Cameroon more than half a million each, we are probably talking about a population of around 5 million across sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.” To put that in perspective: there are an estimated 22 million cavies in Peru alone and another 15 million in Ecuador. The two Andean countries now count only cavy mothers because total populations fluctuate too much over a year to permit meaningful statistics.

LEARNING FROM SOUTH AMERICAN BREEDERS

A commercial farmer in Peru will stock more than 20,000 cavies, while Ecuador’s largest producer has 80,000. In Africa, on the other hand, the biggest cavy breeders keep at most around 400 animals. African smallholders could learn a great deal from the experience amassed over decades in Latin America. That realisation prompted the creation of a south-south workshop in Africa where South American cavy producers share their knowledge with African colleagues. Maass has been running it since 2016.

Aspects of professional breeding operations include appropriate feed, improved hygiene, separation by age group and selection of particularly fast-growing specimens with a high final weight. It is important to reduce inbreeding through controlled mating. Cavies bred and reared to professional standards are ready for slaughter within about three months. The final weight is about one kilogramme. By contrast, the peak weight of those reared by African farmers is just 400 grams so far.

The workshops in Africa promote the so-called innovation platform model, which, according to Maass, impresses even South American breeders. The aim of the platforms is to convene as many different stakeholders as possible along the value chain – producers, dealers, restaurateurs, bankers, reporters, researchers and many more. “In launching the workshops, we have initiated an active exchange between African and South American breeders,” Maass says.



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Cavies in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

hunted). Bushmeat is eaten throughout the continent. Cavy husbandry could thus help to protect biodiversity.

The physical size of cavies and the way they are reared are especially advantageous in conflict regions. “If you need to run from danger, you can easily grab a couple of cavies and stick them in your pocket,” Maass explains, “you cannot do that with cows, goats or pigs”. Larger animals, moreover, attract thieves. Marauding groups take interest. In Africa’s rural areas, livestock is typically considered a sign of prosperity. Cavies, however, are normally kept indoors, out of sight, or can easily be hidden if necessary.

Disease resistance is another plus that makes cavies an attractive proposition, especially in times of crisis, when food and medicines are in short supply. They are easy

vies are raised and sold mainly by women and children. In many cases, the money is used to pay school fees or make purchases that benefit the whole family. In the Iringa region of Tanzania, some 500 kilometres west of the capital Dar es Salaam, a survey revealed that cavy is the second-most popular meat after beef, on par with pork and chicken.

Cavies are widespread from Senegal in West Africa to Tanzania in the east. However, most countries do not include them in their official livestock statistics. This may be because European scientists play a lead role in many of the censuses and Europeans do not class cavies as livestock. The size of the total cavy population in Africa is very hard to estimate, Maass says, because it changes so fast. “If we assume that Congo has a mini-

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Live up to the rhetoric

The EU is proud that protecting human rights is central to its efforts to make the world a better place, and has repeatedly defined this goal as integral to its foreign policy. That's the theory. The reality often looks different – in Central Asia, for example.

By Hugh Williamson

The EU has sought for decades to improve Central Asia's region's often terrible rights record, but delivery has been patchy and inconsistent. The presence of Russia and China on Central Asia's doorstep and the EU's own competing priorities influence its approach. The EU could use existing mechanisms to be more effective and should make it clear that human rights abuses could lead to serious political consequences.

Eighty million people live in this region between Europe and Asia, comprising Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These governments have jailed many political prisoners, a record of torture in detention facilities and heavy limits on free speech and the right to protest. Violence against women, including domestic violence, is commonplace. Apart from Kyrgyzstan, the region's only parliamentary democracy, highly authoritarian governments dominate the political landscape – and are the main interlocutors for the EU.

Abuses affect ordinary people. Take three recent examples. Akzam Turgunov is an Uzbek human-rights activist released in 2017 after nine years as a political prisoner. Under a new president, Uzbekistan's government has since 2016 improved some aspects of human rights and released dozens of political detainees, but it's still almost impossible to register an independent human-rights group – as Turgunov has applied several times to do. Freeing many of those unfairly jailed was good, but that doesn't make human-rights work more accepted.

In Tajikistan, Zebo Z (not her real name) was beaten by her husband. Covered in blood, she sought help from the city prosecutor only to have him refuse to help and

call her husband. The government has taken steps to address domestic violence but much more is needed, especially making it a criminal offense and ensuring that the abusers are punished.

In Turkmenistan, one of the world's most closed countries, the government is responsible for the enforced disappearances for nearly two decades of dozens of former officials and perceived critics. Relatives suffer the agony of not knowing if their loved ones are dead or alive.



Kyrgyzstan is Central Asia's only parliamentary democracy: soldiers taking part in independence-day celebrations in Bishkek, the capital, in 2018.

The EU has the capacity and leverage to exert influence on such issues and on reforming the structures that underpin such abuses. The bloc has been engaged in Central Asia since these counties gained independence in the early 1990s. It is the largest donor in region, with support worth €1 billion between 2014–20 from EU institutions and member states, including for legal reforms, training judges and promoting independent media. The European Parliament has played an important role in promoting human rights in the region and has held the European Commission accountable for not giving sufficient attention to grave rights abuses.

In 2019, the EU adopted a new strategy on the region, with marked improvements on the previous one from 2007, which was weak on human rights. The new one calls on countries to uphold human-rights standards, to allow activists, journalists and trade unionists “to operate freely and safely”, and to eradicate torture.

Turning such commitments into results will be difficult, however. The geopolitical context is part of the explanation. Russia retains its political and economic influence in the region. China has significantly stepped up its presence, especially via infrastructure projects and massive loans to under-resourced governments. Europe's approach can appear lumbering in comparison to these actors that regularly ignore human-rights norms.

Peter Burian, EU special representative for Central Asia, suggested the EU is aware of this danger when he joked at a recent business conference that “China is coming with an offer nobody can refuse, while the EU is coming with an offer nobody can understand”.

Nevertheless, some government officials in the region know that western investment, technology and innovation are important for their future, and that western companies need clear and predictable legal frameworks based on the rule of law to make long-term commitments.

The main limit on the EU's effectiveness is its own lack of political will amid the

competing interests that shape its approach to the region. EU officials need to weigh, for instance, security, foreign policy, trade and energy interests. But to live up to its own commitments, the bloc needs to ensure that human-rights aspects are genuinely a central part of the conversation.

There are structures that could be used more effectively. The EU has an annual human-rights dialogue with each Central Asian country. It would be better if that dialogue was not simply an exchange, but a structured process with clear benchmarks for key human-rights issues. Whether such benchmarks are reached should influence progress in other parts of the EU's relations with these countries.

LEVERAGING TRADE PREFERENCES

Central Asian governments have been keen to sign agreements with the EU to codify and strengthen economic ties. Agreements for trade privileges, such as the special incentive arrangement GSP+ (GSP stands for "generalise scheme of preferences")

granted in 2016 to Kyrgyzstan, come with commitments to abide by international human-rights and labour standards. The EU could be more rigorous in ensuring that Kyrgyzstan is upholding these standards when reviewing the GSP+ as well as before it grants this status to other countries in the region.

Similarly, human rights are part of broader partnership and cooperation agreements between the EU and individual Central Asian states. The EU could better use its leverage to insist during negotiations on these agreements on human-rights improvements, and then prioritise human-rights aspects during the regular reviews of the agreements. The EU should have pressed Kazakhstan to deliver more, including to release the land-rights activist Maks Bokaev, before signing its cooperation agreement. It should spare no effort to get rights activist, Azimjon Askarov, out of jail before concluding a similar agreement with Kyrgyzstan.

Finally, the EU should be less wary of using other instruments to curb severe

rights abuses, such as joint action in the UN or Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. These could be used to apply more pressure on Turkmenistan to end enforced disappearances. The EU could also use targeted asset freezes or travel bans on individuals in Tajikistan responsible for unjustly jailing journalists, opposition activists and lawyers under that government's four-year crackdown.

The appointment of a new European Commission and the election of a new European Parliament offer opportunities for more focused and assertive steps by the EU in Central Asia. To protect the rights of the region's population it is vital for the EU to fulfil its important role on human rights in the region as effectively as possible.



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Transport infrastructure

People appreciate mobility – and traffic drives economic development and prosperity. Safety matters, and so does environmental sustainability. The challenge is to build infrastructure that enhances lives but reduces harmful impacts and hazards to the minimum. Such infrastructure must serve poor and disadvantaged communities rather than only the prosperous few.



This focus section directly relates to several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – including SDG1 (no poverty), SDG3 (good health and well-being), SDG7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities).

In many agglomerations, including Bangkok, more attention is being paid to pedestrians than in the past.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Railway to nowhere

Kenya's ambitious cross-country railway project, meant to connect Mombasa to Uganda and beyond, has sparked a furore. Critics complain of secrecy, poor planning, corruption, lack of commercial viability, excessive indebtedness to China and other flaws. But the project has its supporters too. They have a broader economic vision.

By Alphonse Shiundu

Kenya's new cross-country railway line, with its fast, modern trains and gleaming stations, is intended to showcase the country's ambitions to create a prosperous economy under its own stewardship, free of colonialist influences. Instead the project, popularly known as "the SGR" for standard-gauge railway, has run into stiff headwinds.

This autumn, the government inaugurated a new segment of the new railway line. The 120-kilometre stretch links northwestern Nairobi to the Rift Valley town of Naivasha. The new segment extends an existing 485-kilometre SGR line between Nairobi and the port city of Mombasa, which was similarly financed by China and was opened in 2017.

The new segment was opened with great fanfare, with official speeches and ribbon-cutting. Yet celebrations were muted by a financial cloud hanging over the project: Last April China's government said it would not finance or build the third phase of the project, which aims to connect Naivasha with Malaba on the Ugandan border, about 350 kilometres northwest of Naivasha.

Kenya's government plans to go ahead with phase three anyway, funding a refurbishment of a portion of the old colonial-era railway with its own, much more limited funds. For now, though, the modern railway ends in Naivasha, where the government plans to build an industrial park to encourage rail freight on the new line, but so far has not done so.

The rail link ends in Naivasha – a small town with no major industrial facilities or other transport links. The gleaming new line has thus attracted the epithet "railway to nowhere".

The current "end of the line" at Naivasha also calls into question whether an original regional masterplan that envisaged extending rail links beyond the Uganda border to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo will ever be implemented.

ENGINE OF CONTROVERSY

The truncated building plan is not the only source of controversy. Critics contend the rail line is not commercially viable. It was intended mainly as a freight route, but freight owners have so far stayed away, citing high costs of using rail compared to road

The new Chinese-built railway terminates in Syokimau, nearly 20 kilometres south-east of the capital's central business district. That location adds to the costs of passengers who are travelling to and from central Nairobi. It similarly affects freight-shippers.

Above all, controversy surrounds the cost of the rail line, the published details of which are sparse. Apart from Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta and his senior officials few people in Kenya know the total railway's cost and contract terms. The Chinese embassy in Nairobi, of course, is informed too.

Much of the \$1.5 billion (€1.35 billion) cost of building the new stretch from Nairobi to Naivasha was funded by loans from the Chinese government. So was the estimated \$3.2 billion cost of building the phase one track from Mombasa to Nairobi.

Those cost totals are estimates, however. The full cost and the detailed breakdowns are not publicly known. When Ken-



A train approaching Maai Mahiu station on the way to Naivasha.

transport. Kenyan firms also complain that the government is trying to force them to use the rail line even if it is not economical for them to do so.

Controversy surrounds the precise choice of route for the railway line moreover. The old railway line, which was built during British rule, the Mombasa-Nairobi section terminated in downtown Nairobi.

yan journalists pressed President Kenyatta for further details, he replied, "You want the contract? I will give it to you tomorrow." However, the contract remains secret, and efforts to use Kenya's "Access to Information" law to get it have so far been fruitless (see box next page).

To top it all off, critics say that corruption may have been involved in the project.



In 2018 authorities arrested the chairman of the National Land Commission, as well as senior officials of the state-run railway, on suspicions over land allocation and the amount of compensation paid for railway land.

TIES THAT BIND

None of this changes the fact that the new railway line, at least in theory, takes a much-needed step toward closing Kenya's – and Africa's – infrastructure gap. As a necessary part of developing productive economies, African governments must invest in infrastructure and open up large swathes of land for new roads and railways. Initiatives such as Kenya's Vision 2030 – the country's development programme from 2008 to 2030 – and Africa's Agenda 2063, the African Union's blueprint for transforming the continent, call for such large-scale projects.

Infrastructure is costly and governments with limited budgets have to borrow much of that money, hoping that the infrastructure will promote job-generating investment. In the words of Transport Minister James Macharia, "we need to be positive and patriotic".

Despite all the criticisms of the SGR project, the fact remains that passengers can now travel from Mombasa to Nairobi in four hours, half the time it took before. Freight travels from Mombasa to Nairobi in about the same time. President Kenyatta points out that, over 100 years after British colonialists built the old metre-gauge railway, a new modern one is taking shape, this time under Kenyan management and control.

Advocates also say that completing the cross-country line in Kenya will open new vistas for external trade. The original region-wide masterplan in 2007 envisioned a long railway line extending from Mombasa via Nairobi to Uganda and then onwards in a southwesterly direction to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another line was intended to link Kenya with South Sudan to the north. "The SGR project will not be completed until we get to those countries," Transport Minister Macharia said.

Officials point to ample evidence that new infrastructure will drive commerce and industry, even if a new line is not profitable on its own in the near term. Kenya's devel-

oped areas tend to be within 100 miles on either side of the old metre-gauge railway. Officials say that a new railway will spur development along its route.

Certainly, such investments are not always profitable, at least in terms of the returns made by the infrastructure itself. One example is the Tanzania-Zambia railway, a decades-old 1,860-km Chinese-built railway between Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and New Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia. The Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority received a financial boost from its government owners in October, after consistently failing to make a profit.

Critics of Kenya's SGR argue that the Tanzania-Zambia Railway's lack of profitability should serve as a warning about building a white elephant in Kenya. The debate continues in Kenya both over the commercial viability of the SGR itself – the parts completed so far and the part yet to be built – and over the line's multiplier effects on economic growth in general.

There may be no precise answers to be found now to either question. But more government openness about the project's finances and its terms and conditions would inspire more confidence.



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Massive Chinese lending

According to estimates, Kenya has taken about \$4.7 billion worth of Chinese loans to build the new railway. The magnitude of the loans is also controversial. China holds over one-fifth of Kenya's external debt, raising concerns about how its economic leverage might affect Kenya's sovereignty.

Beyond the financial cost is a potentially bigger question: What did Kenya offer China as collateral for the

loans? Kenya's auditor general reportedly questioned whether, under the contract, Kenya agreed to hand over ownership of the Port of Mombasa if it defaults on its railway loans. The public would like to know more – but the matter is non-transparent.

In that connection, critics note that the feasibility study, cost estimates, funding and construction of the rail line were all done by Chinese firms

under China's "Belt and Road" infrastructure programme. Kenyan officials and well-connected Kenyan businesses encouraged the work. But there was little public debate about the precise aims and commercial viability of Kenya's largest infrastructure project since independence.

Further criticism concerns the division of labour between Chinese and Kenyan participants in the project. The contract reportedly promises a transfer of skills, so that Kenyans can take significant roles in the building and operation of

the railway. However, Kenyan workers trained as technicians and locomotive drivers reportedly had been given menial jobs instead.

In general, critics say, more of the work – both skilled and unskilled – should be done by Kenyans, in view of Kenya's widespread unemployment, particularly among the country's youth. Some critics sarcastically state that, if the government builds a railway to nowhere, that project should at very least provide jobs to young people (see main story). as

RURAL REGIONS

No alternative

Air travel is expensive and environmentally harmful. Nonetheless, it is not a luxury, but a necessity in South Sudan. The reasons are poor infrastructure and a harsh security situation.

By Parach Mach

South Sudan is a huge country with few roads. Its road network considered to be one of the poorest in Africa. Compounding the problems, the weather and violence sometimes make roads impassable.

In the rainy season, entire communities are cut off from the rest of the country. The trip from Jonglei State in the Northeast to the capital Juba normally takes one day by car, but, as dirt roads turn into muddy ditches in the rainy season, it takes two or even more days. Things are similar in many remote regions of developing countries, and the climate emergency is likely to make matters worse.

Obviously, South Sudan's long history of civil strife has added to the problems. On the one hand, it has prevented proper infrastructure from being built, and on the other, it has fostered insecurity and a propensity to act violently. Peace has been formally restored in 2018, but the formation of the new government, which is meant to involve the rival parties, keeps being postponed. Armed groups are present in many parts of the country. Cattle raids, family vendettas and plain crime cause trouble.

Ajodha Ojuda, a journalist, says that he fears road ambushes. He runs a radio sta-



tion in the remote rural town of Pibor, but has to go to the capital regularly. There is no road link to Juba, however, and trucks have to use an informal track through the bush in the dry months. In the wet months, there is no land route. He says he has often travelled by truck himself, but is increasingly wary of doing so because it can lead to violent death.

Commercial flights are infrequent and expensive. A flight from Pibor to Juba costs up to \$270, which is more money than most South Sudanese people earn in a year.



Shadow of small airplane flying over South Sudan.

Even a short trip of 100 kilometres will cost around \$100. It would, of course, only take an hour or so on a good tarmac road – but there is a lack of such roads. People who can afford to fly, often do not see any alternative. And they must often go hundreds of miles out of their way, transferring through other towns to get to their destinations. Such deviations, of course, cost time and money.

In many cases, however commercial flights are not available. Koang Chuol, a businessman from Paloich, says that people like him then use cargo planes. It is common for individuals to hire cargo planes, and to reduce the costs, they are happy to crowd some passengers onto the plane. The

small airstrips that are found all over the country typically include a small office that facilitates this kind of flight sharing.

The airports charge people landing fees, but passengers wonder where that money ends up. The simple facilities do not seem to require much funding for maintenance. Corruption is said to be common.

Manyok Ayuel works for a local airline called Smile Tour and Travel Operations. He says that launching a new flight route requires local-government permissions that are not easy to get, with bribes often adding to the considerable costs. Flight operators in general complain about legal and regulatory barriers.

Flying is safer than road trips, but it is not safe. In September 2018, 19 people died when a small aircraft carrying passen-

gers from Juba to Yirol crashed in a lake. The South Sudan Civil Aviation Authority admits that the number of accidents and security incidents is above the East African average, with out-dated aircrafts being one of the reasons. It fits the setting of a war-torn country, that the UN Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) has the reputation for offering expensive, but reliable flight services. It is managed by the World Food Programme.



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Container ship docked in Cotonou.

PORT OF COTONOU

Competitive squall at the pier

The Autonomous Port of Cotonou, Benin's economic engine, is facing a major new challenge from neighbouring Nigeria, one of its biggest customers.

By Karim Okanla

Benin is one of the world's poorest countries, but nonetheless has a few economic trump-cards. According to official statistics, the economy has grown steadily in the past four years. Substantial investments have been made in infrastructure. Efforts are also underway to significantly increase cotton and cashew-nuts production, the country's main cash crops.

As investments in power generation have increased, the incidence of blackouts has fallen. And Cotonou, the country's economic hub, boasts a seaport. It attracts cargo bound for land-locked neighbours such as Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, as well as for its wealthier neighbour Nigeria. Regional integration within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is less than perfect, but it helps the port to thrive.

The Autonomous Port of Cotonou is "the lung of the national economy," according to the World Food Programme's Logistics Capacity Assessment (LCA), a database of information on the logistics capacity of the world's ports to handle humanitarian aid deliveries.

The port handles trade with Europe, North and South America and Asia, "making Cotonou a 'warehouse city' generating intense trade, handling and logistics activity," according to the LCA, which adds that Cotonou is the fourth most important port in West Africa.

A glance at the statistics shows the port's economic significance for Benin. According to the LCA, the port handles 90% of Benin's foreign trade and generates more than 60% of its GDP. It processes an annual freight volume of 12 million tonnes, according to Port of Antwerp International (PAI). This subsidiary of Belgium's Antwerp Port Authority was chosen to modernise Cotonou in late 2017.

A walk along the port's docks brings the statistics to life. An astounding variety of goods pours in daily: manufactured foods,

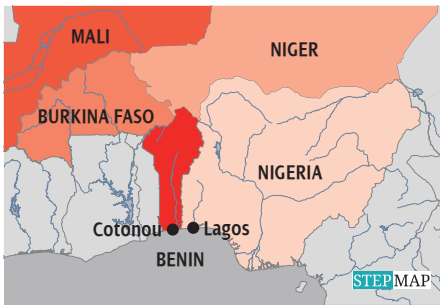
bulk agricultural crops, fertilisers, metals and minerals, Chinese fabrics, second-hand clothes, used vehicles and household appliances.

That last category – used vehicles and household appliances – has become a blemish on the port's reputation. It has become known or even infamous for handling imports of used vehicles and other equipment that would fail technical inspection in developed countries. Large shipments of old, rusting trucks and broken household appliances transit through Benin, heading for inland markets. They may be affordable, but they are of poor quality and environmentally harmful.

The port has its share of problems beyond the image issues associated with its trade in broken vehicles. Logistics companies complain about long waiting times. According to Africa News, the PAI was tasked with improving that record, by reorganising and restructuring the administration, computerising services, disseminating a code of good behaviour and training the staff, among other things. Results remain to be seen.

COMPETITIVE JOLT

All these challenges pale in comparison with the jolt the port received on 20 August 2019: Nigeria's federal government imposed a ban on imports over land borders of a wide



variety of items, including a range of foods, used clothing and furniture. The ban was reinforced with an order that blocked Nigeria's Central Bank from providing hard currencies for purchasing banned items.

Until this decree, Nigeria, with its 200 million inhabitants and relatively high purchasing power, had been one of Benin's – and the Port of Cotonou's – best customers. Nigeria's government justified its action by pointing to high rates of smuggling and a general need to crack down on crime.

At the same time, Nigeria made moves to boost its own capacity to handle maritime trade. The government announced plans to build a new deep-sea port in Warri, Delta State, thanks to Chinese investment and is considering two additional facilities to handle maritime trade. The background is that the two seaports in Lagos, West Africa's commercial hub, face serious congestion. Cotonou's port has benefited from the Lagos Port Complex at Apapa and the Tin Can Island Port being overburdened.

In the competitive market for port services, the likely upgrade of the Nigerian ports that serve Lagos is bad news for Cotonou. So far, it has received much of the seaborne cargo bound for Nigeria. Capacity constraints in Nigeria were an important reason.

According to John Igué, Benin's former minister of trade, a long-lasting ban on trade over land borders with Nigeria will only worsen Benin's economic outlook. The ban could also encourage smugglers to

evade the decree, as domestic prices rise in Nigeria in response to scarcity.

The Port of Cotonou's Belgian managers are evaluating their response to the new competitive challenge. According to press reports, Benin will start implementing a €450 million modernisation plan at the Port of Cotonou in 2020. The aim is to make the port a more secure and efficient platform for its many trading partners, not just those in Nigeria. In the competitive world of ports, that is the only way forward.

LINK

The World Food Programme's Logistics Capacity Assessment:

<https://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/LCA+Homepage>



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An indigenous woman rides the aerial tramway that connects the Bolivian capital La Paz with neighbouring city El Alto, 400 metres higher.

GONDOLA LIFTS

Up in the air

Practical, affordable and eco-friendly: in recent decades, Latin American cities have been building aerial tramway systems to provide a transport service for urban districts with geographical and social challenges. They operate successfully in many cities around the world. In others, however, they draw criticism for failing to meet local needs.

By Julia Jaroschewski

South American cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Caracas, La Paz or Rio de Janeiro all have similar problems: while middle and upper-class residents enjoy good road and rail connections in the districts where they live, the poorer people – who often live in much more remote, mountainous neighbourhoods – face long daily commutes by bus or motorcycle-taxi on heavily congested roads.

To tackle the growing mobility problems, many Latin American agglomerations

have invested in aerial tramways. The advantages are obvious: cableways can be built fast and at a comparatively low cost. They are also environmentally friendly and, bearing in mind the explosive growth of urban populations, give people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods access to urban centres that would otherwise be hard to reach (see box next page). In theory, at least. In Europe and the United States, this kind of transport infrastructure mostly serves tourists in mountain areas, and tickets tend to be expensive. In South America, by contrast, it is a democratising mode of transport – provided it is accepted by the community.

This was not the case in Rio de Janeiro. The gondola lift built in 2011 for the Complexo do Alemão was hailed as a major infrastructural asset for this poor northern favela complex. With six stations, the cable car system took residents to the public train station which connected them to a train sta-

tion with fast links to the city centre, free of charge and with minimal environmental impact. Previously, people had to rely on motorcycle-taxis or locally organised minibus services. The new scheme was thought to be perfect – but it did not work. Within just five years, after the 2016 Olympic Games were over, the cable car services were suspended. Rio de Janeiro's gondola lift revealed the weaknesses of a system that works well elsewhere.

The gondolas have been in storage for three years now. All that remains is the giant stations crowning the hills, where police seek shelter in shootouts with drug gangs. The cableway's fate was sealed by two factors: corruption and a change of operator. Its problems were summed up by Colombian architect Alejandro Echeverri at a 2013 city planning conference in Rio: "The Rio gondola lift does not appear to be accepted by the community."

Sceptical residents of Rio say the city should first build a proper sewer system instead of investing in a prestigious gondola lift. "Most favela residents oppose the cableway because only tourists will benefit from it," explains Michel Silva, a citizen reporter. He is from the Rocinha favela, which was

supposed to get a gondola lift as well. “Money is wasted on the aerial tramway while we still have to live with open sewers.”

LIKE A DREAM

Things are different in Medellin, Colombia – a city with many steep slopes. Its “Metrocable” system has been working like a dream since 2004. An award-winning model project, it was launched in conditions similar to those in Rio: poor urban districts clinging to mountain slopes, a city of marked social inequalities and paralysing traffic. Here, too, it was easier to build an aerial tramway than to build one at street level or underground.

Despite its success, however, Medellin’s system also draws criticism. Some residents and organisations complain that the project primarily serves tourism and promotes gentrification. Tourists in Medellin like to travel by cable car. So do their counterparts in Bolivia’s capital La Paz, where the cable car network has become one of the city’s biggest tourist attractions. “Mi Teleférico” has been in successful operation over the mountains since 2014 and connects La Paz with the neighbouring city of El Alto, 400 metres higher. El Alto has about about one million, mostly indigenous people.

Connecting it to La Paz was a priority for Evo Morales, the controversial left-

wing president who was in power from 2006 to November 2019 (see comment by Katie Cashman on page 13 of this e-Paper). His inclusive policies helped to stabilise the country politically, but his authoritarian tendencies became increasingly evident. He fled the country in a post-election crisis and his supporters speak of a military coup.

With ten lines in operation, the La Paz agglomeration now has the most extensive aerial public transport system in the world. The first line opened in 2014 and the last one is due to be completed in 2020. In contrast to other megacities, the cable car system here is not a supplementary means of transport; it is the principal local public transport system. “Teleférico reaches a large part of the Bolivian population. It is the government’s most extensive and costliest project and was constructed within a very short time. This required new national legislation,” says Cecilia Barja, a social worker. However, she argues that local authorities should have been involved in the implementation.

According to its own figures, Teleférico now carries around 2 million passengers a month, who can even avail themselves of solar-based Wifi systems installed in the gondolas. Nevertheless, Barja feels the cable car system fails to solve the main problem of transport: “Like everywhere in South America, we are experiencing vigorous urbanisa-

tion. Cities are getting fuller and fuller. Yet instead of integrating the cableway into the existing transport network, they designed it as an independent system.”

Nevertheless, poorer communities in particular are benefiting from the boom in cable car systems – in Cali, Manizales and Medellin in Colombia, Ecatepec in Mexico, Caracas in Venezuela and Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Guatemala also plans to build a system in the coming years. Aerial tramways can carry far fewer passengers than an underground railway but any capacity shortfall is evidently outweighed by the fact that they are faster and cheaper to build. Moreover, they serve as an additional tourist attraction – one that gives a significant boost to urban districts.

But local communities remain ambivalent: “It’s a wonderful, exciting, memorable experience. You see new parts of the city and you get into conversation with strangers in the gondolas,” says Barja. “That is all very positive but it does not make up for the costs we end up paying in a poor country like Bolivia.”



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Sustainable urban transport

Aerial tramways are a promising and sustainable means of urban public transport. To start with, they are fairly cheap and easy to build. According to manufacturer Leitner Ropeways, the costs run to about half of those of a tram system on the ground and around a tenth of those of an underground railway. Cableway infrastructure requires very little space and has a comparatively small environmental impact.

Another major advantage in times of climate crisis is that

cable car systems can be powered by emission-free electricity. According to Leitner Ropeways, energy consumption can be adjusted according to passenger volumes. A central drive unit in one station is sufficient to move many gondolas. As a result, operating costs are low.

Finally, because service intervals can be short and operations are unaffected by road traffic, cable car systems can carry large numbers of people from A to B quickly and reliably.

E+Z/D+C



Aerial tramway in Medellin, Colombia.

NON-MOTORISED TRANSPORT

Expand sidewalks and bike lanes

Around the world, motorised individual transport has increased rapidly in recent decades. Particularly in large metropolises, the huge number of cars has become a massive problem, with negative impacts on people’s quality of life, the environment and economic development. Measures to strengthen non-motorised transport are urgently needed – not least because they would serve a social justice perspective.

By Nicholas Hollmann

As a means of getting from one place to another, walking or cycling have a number of advantages: they are eco-friendly and inexpensive, have health benefits and require very little space. They do not lead to the negative consequences of motorised transport such as air pollution, noise exposure and greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming.

Nonetheless, car traffic is prioritised in many places. The car is a status symbol that stands for prosperity and progress. It also has great economic relevance. Without motorised transport, trade in its present form would be impossible, remote areas would be nearly inaccessible and nationwide distribution networks would seem utopian. On the other hand, systemic limits have been reached in many congested areas and metropolises. In those places, more non-motorised transport can significantly contribute to solving problems. A good example is Bangkok, which is famous for its permanent traffic jams (see box next page).

MANY FATALITIES

Pedestrians and cyclists are killed disproportionately often in traffic accidents (see article by Katja Dombrowski, p. 32). That is true worldwide, but the risk to non-motorised road users is highest in Africa’s big cities. For example, pedestrians made up 65% of all traffic fatalities in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi in 2016, according to official data. Like other metropolises around the world, Nairobi’s urban planning has badly ne-

glected cyclists, pedestrians and other non-motorised road users for decades. It focused instead on expanding infrastructure for motor vehicles, particularly cars.

In 2015, however, Nairobi began to change course. In cooperation with the Share the Road Programme of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which aims to improve the situation of pedestrians and cyclists in the global South, the city drafted a policy specifically for non-motorised transport. Nairobi’s governor at the time, Evans Kidero, gave several reasons, including the following: “There is clear evidence that non-motorised transport provides efficient mobility with substantially low investment.”

First and foremost, such a policy must improve conditions for strongly disadvantaged road users, namely pedestrians and cyclists. Relevant measures include building sidewalks and bike trails as well as calming down traffic, for instance, by introduc-

ing 20 mile per hour zones or curves in the road. Such measures should be supplemented by awareness-raising campaigns. In order to show that they are serious, Nairobi’s municipal leaders determined that 20% of the road-construction budget must be used for infrastructure for non-motorised and public transport.

Carly Koinange, the director of the Share the Road Programme, thinks Nairobi is setting a good example not only for Africa. The earmarking of funds is something the global North could adopt too, she told Zeit online, the web version of a prominent German newspaper. Her intention is not to create a rivalry between developing and industrialised countries, but rather to promote equity among all the different road users.

Only time will tell how successful and sustainable Nairobi’s new traffic policy is. Between 2013 and 2019, the number of the city’s registered motorised vehicles climbed from just under 2 million to about 3 million. Traffic jams and chaos are part of everyday life – and they go along with serious economic costs: according to World Bank estimates, Nairobi loses half a million dollars a day due to traffic jams.

Transport planners in Nairobi are promoting non-motorised transport to improve



Infrastructure in the Nairobi agglomeration mostly facilitates motorised traffic.

living for all residents in terms of better air quality and less noise. Furthermore, according to Kidero, private households will be able to save money because non-motorised transport tends to be cheaper. The construction of sidewalks and bike paths will improve access. And since the majority of lower-income people depend on non-motorised transport, their income situation will improve and they may even find opportunities to earn additional income.

Better infrastructure for non-motorised traffic does not only serve environmental goals, but social justice as well. One reason is that the world's poor suffer from the environmental damage caused by car traffic in particular. The study "Weniger Autos, mehr globale Gerechtigkeit" ("Fewer cars, more global justice"), which was published by the non-governmental agencies Misereor, Brot für die Welt and PowerShift, concludes that "the internal combustion engine must be swiftly renounced in the

interest of environmental and climate justice." And the authors of Share the Road Programme's 2018 annual report went so far as to state: "Sidewalks are the only legitimate, democratic place where every citizen is truly equal."

Attitudes must change in both urban and rural areas in order to keep the climate crisis in check. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) recently announced new record levels of greenhouse gas emissions: instead of plateauing or declining, emissions continue to rise. Eighty percent of the greenhouse effect can be attributed to carbon, and just under 18% of carbon emissions result from transportation.

LINKS

Contribution of modes of transport to CO₂ emissions worldwide:

<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/317683/umfrage/verkehrstraeger-anteil-co2-emissionen-fossile-brennstoffe/>

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Overburdened infrastructure

In 1980, there were just 600,000 cars on the streets of Thailand's capital, but by 1990 the number had risen to 2.3 million. With more cars and increasing mobility, the metropolis' economy grew too – and that led to yet more people being able to afford motor vehicles of their own.

Government subsidies and a massive expansion of the road infrastructure also did their part. Today, it is estimated that there are more than 5 million cars on Bangkok's streets. This city, which, according to UN estimates, is home to about 10 million people, has one of the highest vehicle densities in Asia.

Road expansion was certainly useful, but growth has long since reached its limits. Bangkok's road network can only handle about 2 mil-

lion cars, so drivers on average spend an annual 60 hours stuck in traffic jams. INRIX, a private company based in the USA, has evaluated traffic data from 1,360 cities in 38 countries and found that Bangkok was world's 11th most congested city in 2018.

The Thai research institution Kasikorn Research Center calculates that the traffic on Bangkok's streets causes economic damage amounting to about 11 billion baht (over €300 million) per year. If traffic injuries and deaths are added, an even more dramatic picture of the damage emerges.

Bangkok is a good example for roads often being governed not by fairness, but by the idea that might makes right. Cars, vans and buses force two-wheeled vehicles onto the shoulder and motor-



Traffic chaos in Thailand's capital.

cycle taxis swerve onto sidewalks, endangering pedestrians.

On the other hand, awareness is growing in Thailand's capital. There is a trend towards healthy lifestyles in some parts of society, and rental bikes are popping up in more and more places. The public transport

network has been expanded through the Sky Train and the Bus Rapid Transit system (see my article in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2016/10, Focus section). In the inner city, pedestrians now have skywalks, their own dedicated walkways located above the streets and separate from all other traffic. nh

AIR POLLUTION

Blue-sky policy

Western observers often find fault with Chinese development, noting abuses of human rights or intellectual property for example. By contrast, Indian visitors like our author tend to be impressed by how much the People's Republic has achieved in past decades.

By Aditi Roy Ghatak

Beijing has such a reputation for smog, that I was pleasantly surprised by the azure sky when visiting the city in summer. I checked the air quality index published by the US embassies and consulates. On 28 August, Beijing scored a rather good 20, while my hometown Kolkata was at 57, and figures for locations in Delhi went up to 160.

The plain truth is that the air in Indian cities today tends to be more polluted than in Chinese ones. India lacks the kind of determined and consequential action taken by China. Indeed, Li Ganjie, the environment minister, has stated clearly that quality economic growth must be eco-friendly. That the Communist leadership can address issues by fiat is sometimes of advantage.

According to data compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO), Beijing brought its sulphur dioxide levels down by 70% between 2015 and 2019. In the same period, it reduced particle pollution by 36%. Pollution abatement systems were installed at coal-powered industries and power stations, and cleaner, gas-based facilities were built. Superior fuels were introduced and old vehicles scrapped. Heating homes with solid fuels is no longer permitted.

Air pollution remains a challenge. Though WHO statistics for 62 Chinese cities show that particle pollution was reduced by an average of 30% between 2013 and 2016, not one of them has achieved the WHO's recommended annual average level of 10µg per cubic meter for PM2.5 (atmospheric particulate matter of less than 2.5 micrometres diameter). Only one third of major cities had reached the WHO's interim standard of 35µg.

Nonetheless, it is evident that policy measures are making a difference. Ahead of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the authori-



High-speed train leaving Beijing South railway station.

ties worried about the city's air-pollution reputation and decided to change matters – for instance in urban traffic.

Today, public transport in Beijing relies on 6,600 electric buses for example. Shanghai has even electrified all of its 16,400 public buses. Actually, China has 385,000 electric buses and plans to increase the number to 600,000 by 2025. Electrification of taxis, trucks and other vehicles is on the agenda. An increasing number of private cars are powered by batteries as well.

The People's Republic is an international pioneer in electric mobility, and the battery producer BYD is the global leader in its field. Investors from all over the world are aware of its great relevance for the car industry.

At the same time, China is bicycle-friendly. Beijing has cycles for public use. They are kept on stands and can be unlocked by a smart card. One checks out a bike and on completion of the trip, returns it to a similar stand at one's destination. The fee of barely \$0.15 per hour is automatically deducted.

Climate activists around the world have expressed criticism of Beijing's huge new airport. They should appreciate that megacities in emerging markets have similar transport needs as the typically much less populous capitals of European nations. They should also note that Beijing's new airport has good train connections to the city and its surroundings. It is expected to get a high-speed rail-link to Tianjin by 2022, as the Financial Times reported. The train ride from Beijing's airport to this port agglomeration of 15 million people will take a little less than 40 minutes. This airport will thus serve two megacities, not one.

China's national network of high-speed train lines is impressive. It has vastly reduced the need for domestic air travel. So far, only much smaller countries like Japan or EU members have similar rail infrastructure. Neither India nor the USA have anything similar. They also lack the kind of ambitious blue-sky policy that has been adopted for Beijing and is being extended to other places. Anyone with eyes to see can tell that China is serious about reducing air pollution and protecting the climate.



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ROAD SAFETY

Enacting and enforcing laws

In developing countries, significantly more people die from traffic accidents than in industrialised countries. The economic costs are also much higher. Experts are demanding that the problem be given more political attention.

By Katja Dombrowski

The number of road-traffic deaths is steadily increasing worldwide. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), approximately 1.35 million people died from traffic accidents in 2016. Yet the rate of death relative to the global population, which is also increasing, remained about the same. In light of the rapid expansion of motorisation, the WHO takes this fact as evidence that at least the problem is not getting worse. However, it also points out that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.6, to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020, is no longer attainable.

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for children and young adults between the ages of five and 29. Over half of the people killed are pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists; their share of fatalities is particularly high in developing countries. According to the WHO, 93% of all fatal road-traffic accidents occur in low- and middle-income countries, which are home to 85% of the world's people, who nevertheless own only 60% of all vehicles. The statistic shows that the risk of dying in a traffic accident is three times higher in low-income countries than in high-income countries. The risk is greatest in Africa, followed by Southeast Asia.

The main reason for major differences in traffic safety can be attributed to the fact that the topic is not seen as a political priority in most developing countries. That is the conclusion of a comparative study by Jordanian researchers and civil engineers (Jadaan et al., 2018). According to the study, other important reasons include differences in people's mobility habits and the quality of public transportation systems. Oftentimes,

in developing countries, many different motorised and non-motorised vehicles share the streets, which cuts down on safety.

The fact that both the number of traffic accidents and the number of injuries and fatalities is dramatically increasing in poor countries is also, in the authors' view,

the number of traffic injuries and fatalities in industrialised countries. Improvements to transport infrastructure also played a big role.

The authors of the Jordanian study point out that enacting laws is not enough – they must also be enforced. In developing countries, however, there are often not enough police officers, or they are not well educated or well equipped. Furthermore, there is often no national strategy to improve road safety, and if there is, it is not well implemented. The authors believe that it is urgently necessary that all countries



Road traffic presents many hazards; in Jordan, these include sandstorms and camels.

a major economic problem: in Jordan, for instance, the total estimated cost of traffic accidents in 2009 was \$516.2 million, over two percent of the country's gross domestic product.

The WHO recommends that middle- and low-income countries adopt measures that have proven successful in high-income countries. These include, for instance, speed limits, a helmet requirement for motorcyclists and a seat-belt requirement for all occupants of cars, vans, buses, trucks and so on. According to the study, the introduction of laws that make seat-belt wearing mandatory led to a significant reduction in

develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive road-safety strategy and establish a safety-management system.

LINKS

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SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Fundamental transformation required

Around the world, mobility urgently needs to become more sustainable. According to a recent study, important aspects include access, safety, efficiency and environmental concerns.

By Floreana Miesen

If rural areas' transport infrastructure were better developed, 1 billion more people could get access to education, health care and jobs. Globally, improved traffic safety could prevent 800,000 road deaths per year. These are two important messages of a report that was recently published by Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All), an umbrella organisation of public and private actors.

The authors point out that transport urgently needs to become less dependent on fossil fuels. They consider industrialised countries to be responsible in particular because their transport-related greenhouse-gas emissions per capita are the highest.

According to the report, reducing carbon emissions would not only serve climate protection, but also help to reduce air pollution and the associated health risks. These problems are most severe in South Asia.

Many international agreements specifically address sustainability in the transport sector. Examples include the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement. As the report be- moans, however, implementation remains poor. In some countries, road construction has been promoted to improve access to markets and jobs, but side effects include more deaths as well as more air and noise pollution.

The report draws attention to the trend of isolated technologies – such as electric vehicles, for example – being over-promoted. The obvious idea is to cut green- house-gas emissions, but that will only hap- pen if the electric power used is generated by renewable means, which often is not the case. Moreover, the authors warn that it is

not healthy to reduce the diversity in the means of transport. While appreciating the progress made in some areas, the SuM4All report insists that the need for a funda- mental, systemic transformation is not being met.

The report proposes a list of the most relevant policies for making transport sys- tems sustainable. It offers no blueprint, because each country must take action ac- cording to its specific situation. However, SuM4All presents various instruments in four toolboxes:

- Regulatory and institutional instru- ments include rules on safety, vehicle use, emissions, transport services, cross-border traffic and data management.
- The technology toolbox covers the planning, provision and maintenance of transport infrastructure and services. In this context, the coordination of different means of transport is particularly important and deserves attention at every stage. Safety regulations must be observed as well.

- The economic and financial toolbox includes concerning taxation, subsidies, loans, pricing et cetera. Close coordination of the public sector, which bears responsi- bility for infrastructure, with profit-driven companies is essential. Private individuals and companies use the system, and the lat- ter provide innovative technologies, prod- ucts, services and business models.

- The communication toolbox helps to run awareness raising geared to changing behaviour, identifying transport alterna- tives and managing knowledge.

The report includes an additional web tool for checking out country-specific mobility indices. Such data should inform policymaking. Various indices, such as the number of passengers per rapid train routes, for example, help to assess the quality of ex- isting transport infrastructure. Overall, the report shows that action in this sector can contribute strongly to the global transition to sustainability.

LINK

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Station platform in Marrakech in Morocco.

Guinea pigs – as here in the Democratic Republic of Congo – should be bred in Africa more often as source of protein.
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Photo: Brigitte Maas