

The coloniality of knowledge

An examination of European created infographics about Africa

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Abstract: Infographics make complex knowledge digestible and play a unique role in Western knowledge production. They are often a way through which power dimensions can be enacted. In this paper the question “How do European created infographics about Africa enact the coloniality of knowledge?” will be researched through the theoretical concepts of an *us-them* narrative, *epistemic violence*, and *Eurocentrism*. Five different infographics from European institutions will be analysed with a narrative- and visualisation strategy. Ambiguity in the relationship, country groupings, and inappropriate measurements are the main findings through the narrative strategy. The enactments of colonial division found through the visualisation strategy are problematic depictions of the African continent and visual metaphors and pictograms.

Keywords: Africa; Coloniality; Europe; Infographic; Knowledge



Preface

The master's programme Engaging Public Issues has brought me a lot, academically and personally.

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This research means a lot to me as it practically and symbolically finalises my career as a student.

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And Julia, thank you. For your dialogue, patience, your thoughts, support, and your love.

Knowledge production in a ‘postcolonial’ world

A postcolonial period, as we live in right now, may be defined as the timeframe after the period of colonising a land. Yet, this term ‘postcolonial’ can be deceiving. Yes, European imposing governments in Africa are officially deinstalled and countries like Algeria are not called ‘French territory’ anymore, but a colonial matrix of power is still intact in many aspects (Nwoma et al., 2021). The capitalist appropriation of land, exploitation of wealth and labour, and control over knowledge are just a few examples of ongoing coloniality in a ‘postcolonial’ world (Maldonado-Torres, 2004). It is the knowledge production and dissemination as an element of contemporary colonial power that will be addressed in this paper.

The type of knowledge production that will be discussed are infographics. Graphical information is a source that taps into the extensive abilities of human information digestion. They are vessels to make complex information understandable for people. The power to make information digestible enables infographics to be used for the enactment of the coloniality of knowledge. This has led to the following question:

“How do European created infographics about Africa enact the coloniality of knowledge?”

European created knowledge about Africa is particularly interesting because of the colonial history the two continents share. Knowledge production by the former colonisers *about* the formerly colonised can bring about different problematics. European knowledge about Africa often disregards African history and results in incomplete representations and cultural stereotypes (Mazrui, 1969). Such stereotypes simplify and flatten communities resulting in biases and power imbalances. The realities of African people are understood in distorted ways through European knowledge as it marginalises and devalues African perspectives. Critical evaluation of European created knowledge about Africa is necessary in order to examine how it enacts colonial power dynamics.

The West has dominated knowledge production for some time (Alejandro, 2018). Dominant involvement in the production of knowledge ran parallel with the history of capitalism from the renaissance and enlightenment on (Braudel, 1992; Wallerstein, 1995). These periods of cultural and intellectual awakening paved the way for a new conceptualisation of knowledge in society. A new modernity developed, categorised and identified by reason, more so than belief. This is where science started the development of its unified status that it carries to this date. It is in this transition that the idea of knowledge exclusivity formed (Mignolo, 2002). When renaissance and early capitalist ideas spread to north-Western European countries, the idea of exclusivity did not merely stick to the

methodological concept of science. Following the development of institutional knowledge regulations, conceptualisations of this knowledge were inscribed to their geopolitical spaces. Knowledge concepts from different locations with different histories were inherently placed offside with the evolution of Western European knowledge organisation. North-Western Europe asserted its dominance of knowledge production and dissemination simultaneously with its colonial projects.

The image has been, and still is to date, a very relevant instrument tied to Western knowledge production. In Western thought, images have an inseparable relation with our feelings of freedom (Mondzain, 2009). The power of visual information is the power of the voices that inhabit the image. This relation was already there in ancient Greece, and Western Christianity further strengthened it. Adding to the historically rooted importance for Western knowledge production, visuals can be of great use in knowledge production. Traditional definitions of infographics do not draw the complete picture and undermine their power. Infographics are not 'easy to understand', in fact, this paper shows the opposite. Traditional definitions often act like information can be taken out of the real world and is merely presented in the infographic. They deny the political choices that are made in the process of production. Most infographics used in this research will have a similar layout to what most people would imagine, yet I do not want to underestimate the power that all visualised forms of knowledge hold. In this theoretical respect, the terms image, visual knowledge, and infographics can be used intertwined.

Us-them narrative, epistemic violence, and Eurocentrism

The production of knowledge is never a neutral practice. Knowledge production is often seen as data extracted from the real world that's worked through the science machine and fumbled into objective facts, but this could not be more untrue. Every new form of knowledge takes subjective steps in its production process. What data to use, what narrative to speak in, what design to make, all are liable to personal world views. This subjectiveness is not an argument to take anything away from the validity and intellectual value of set knowledge. It is only to say that a different understanding of objectivity following Haraway's (1988) concept for example, is better suitable. She states that knowledges are shaped by particular social, cultural, historical, and political interests and refers to this as the situatedness of knowledge. Although knowledge is situation dependent, objectivity does still exist within her idea. Objectivity means accountability to the context the knowledge is produced in. Knowledge should always

be considered within the context of production. In a demarcated view of science, the producer's responsibility is allocated to the non-existing neutrality of knowledge (Marres, 2018). Absence of neutrality in knowledge production calls for the accountability of the producer to become an anchor.

The relevance of accountability becomes clear when you fathom the power that knowledge has. Knowledge is a resource and a utility, that's sometimes of more essence to society than capital or labour (Drucker, 1993). It's what allows a society to take shape, imagine futures, and engage in its histories (Ndlovu, 2018). Knowledge is a function of human interests and power relations and can be used as an instrument to exploit these relations. It is this interplay between knowledge production and the exercise of power that enables dominant forces to continue their established position (Foucault, 1980). It's an ongoing process that feeds off itself in a particular relationship like Europe and Africa have. The colonial nature of the relationship between the two bodies can be continued, strengthened, and exploited. Imposing colonial power today becomes possible with knowledge as an *apparatus* (Benyera, 2021).

With the (re)enforcement and exploitation of colonial power relations, different mechanisms are active that work through control, exclusion, and dominance (Benyera, 2021). The effects are holistic and often overflow into each other. Three main mechanisms will be distinguished with the purpose of giving structure and clarity to the theory. The first effect concerns the creation of a clear distinction between a unit of *us* and *them*. Second, knowledges that construct the 'other' as inferior or problematic will be captured under *epistemic violence*. This also concerns effects that create asymmetry in the opportunities of knowledge production and dissemination. Third, *Eurocentrism* contains all attempts to inappropriately apply European concepts to Africa or attempts at capturing the continent of Africa with Eurocentric ideas.

The basis for exploitation of unequal power relations is a strong distinction between us and them. More often than not, modern day borders are not ten-foot-high walls covered in a sea of barbed wire. They are imaginative distinctions between bodies that are actively in- and excluded. The very creation of almost all country borders in Africa is done by European powers. The 'us-them' narrative is used to capitalise a strict divide between Europe and Africa. A tendency as such will (re)produce global inequalities and segregation (Van Houtum & Pijpers, 2007). The unit of the 'us' thrives by and lives off gatekeeping all sorts of assets and knowledge is a seriously effective instrument for creating these gates (Sibley, 1995). Uniting Europe as a union or even the idea of 'Europe' on its own inherently means exclusion of the other. Europe as a body of exclusion needs to express colonial division through knowledge production at risk of self-sufficiency. Knowledge production is an effective and functional process to practise this heterotopia. The discourse of a 'developing world' (ergo: underdeveloped

world) is an example of this concept. The developing world needs to reach the standards of the 'developed world'. Operating in these narratives leads to retainment and strengthening of the presence of a Western country in an 'underdeveloped' country (DuBois, 1991). In this way, a form of an us-them narrative can exercise power relations.

Epistemic violence regards theoretical interpretations that construct the 'other' as inferior or problematic (Teo, 2010). Non-Western cultures and societies can be stigmatised or pathologized in Western research that gives negative connotation to the 'other'. A portrait of communities in Africa gets pictured as if they are poor, sick, and at war. In part this is due to biased research agendas that have preconceived notions of what African societies are. Poverty, disease, and war are researched frequently while other aspects of Africa and African life get neglected (Boatcă & Costa, 2016). In this way, only knowledges about negative aspects of a body are produced. The dominance and control over research institutions, publishers, funds, and other research resources that European knowledge producers have, enable them to practise epistemic violence (Selvaratnam, 1988; Zegeye & Vambe, 2006). This control is furthermore used to manage and give order to populations and natural resources in the global south (Singh & Van Houtum, 2002). Epistemological dominance enables more opportunities for European knowledge to be produced and keeps an intellectual advantage over the 'other'. Limited options for dialogue and exchange can perpetuate colonial power relations as they push Western sources to a superior identity. Non-Western expertise is left with fewer chances of development and expansion (Eberz et. al., 2022; Quijano, 2000).

Eurocentrism is the inappropriate application of Eurocentric concepts to other communities. The global south is often submerged in Western concepts in order to produce knowledge about it. A lot of concepts that apply to European communities or lands are not suitable for research on Africa (Jackson-Lohman, 2013). Differences in cultures, economies, politics, and histories make it impossible for the same measures to be applied to the two different worlds (Austin, 2007). Gross National Product is a good example of an instrument that's mistreated when producing knowledge about Africa. In Europe almost every part of the economy is captured monetarily, almost all activities are fulfilled in the formal sector, while African economies have larger 'informal' sectors and are less monetary based. The GDP also does not account for income inequality or quality of life, which are larger issues in (sub-Saharan) Africa than in Europe. The application of inappropriate concepts on African communities and land leaves the continent in a disadvantaged position, especially in comparisons with Europe. Furthermore, the dominance of the Western standard is used to manage and give order to populations in the global south and their resources (Singh & Van Houtum, 2002). All these forms of neglect, control, exclusion and dependency contribute to the (re)enforcement of colonial power relations. This mistreatment is an oppressive practise with the desire to sustain and prolong colonial heritage (Ndlovu, 2018).

Images have a unique and essential position in the use of knowledge as a tool for exploiting power relations. Graphic information is such a complex concept that the objective becomes: how to deal with these powerful features? Mitchell (2005, p30) has a valuable take on this question: *“Our task is not to overcome the controversies that our premodern attitudes towards images create. Our task is to understand them and work through their symptomatology”*. Working through these controversies has everything to do with context. The infographic is always contextualised by its creator *and* beholder. Production of graphic information about a relationship like Europe and Africa have is a very sensitive process. The time and place of both production and reception are vital for what the graphic information can do. The autonomy of an image cannot be claimed without regarding the cultural and historical location (Elkins & Naef, 2012). Images cannot work without the presence of an encultured being, just as humans cannot work without the presence of encultured artefacts (Elkins & Naef, 2012).

Visual information is processed quicker and more efficiently by the human brain than bodies of text or plain numbers (Cairo, 2012). Imagery can specifically be of assistance in comprehending knowledge about complex issues, making it a vital tool for most people’s knowledge consumption. Knowledge in an infographic significantly accelerates the understanding of information through pattern recognition (Alyahya, 2019; Siricharoen, 2015; Krum, 2013). The efficiency that makes it easier to process for the consumer makes the producer’s task only harder (Noh et. al., 2015).

Graphic design choices are inseparably connected to the knowledge created with them (Tufte, 1991). Making design decisions is a complex process. First decisions need to be made on what ‘data’ to use in the infographic. Then, translating data to actual colours residing in the viewer's mind is beset by uncertainties and complexities. These translations are nonlinear, idiosyncratic, and very relative with plenty of differences in perception found among beholders (Sliburyte & Skeryte, 2014). As Tufte (1991) writes in his book ‘Envisioning information’: *“Even putting a good colour in a good place is a complex matter. Indeed, so difficult and subtle that avoiding catastrophe becomes the first principle in bring colour to information: Above all, do no harm.”* In all the steps of setting objectives, data selection and organisation, and designing the product, the creator has to make political choices (Alyahya, 2019). Visual Knowledge creation is, through these decisions, an inherently political process (Pusser et al., 2012). It is an illusion to think that knowledge can be created neutrally.

Images are signs of our belief. They can go beyond rationale as they touch beliefs and values deeply embedded in our minds (Mondzain, 2010) The relation between knowledge and belief is at the centre of the operation of images. Defining infographics as ‘representers of information’ speaks of ignorance of the political

power they possess (Elkins & Naef, 2012). This can be problematic when the contexts that make graphic knowledge production a tool to enact power relations are considered (Bhabra, 2014). The image has abilities to lie within history, break with it, or even escape it. By presenting the beholder with information, new knowledge is imprinted under control of the producer. Furthermore, redundancy is used in knowledge production to capitalise on the already existing colonial divisions. The control of images is as often a practice of what people don't see, as what people do see. To prohibit people from being exposed to certain information is a manageable practice, whereas critical thought about present knowledge is uncontrollable.

Infographics

For practical and delineation purposes this research will focus on static infographics and leave animated or interactive infographics disregarded. Most of the infographics discussed will be so called 'storygraphics' (Otten et. al., 2015). They are defined by their employment of data visualisations and images in order to convey a larger story or narrative. The infographics will have to have both significant bodies of text and complementing/elaborating visual elements. The infographics selected will have to be produced by European governments, NGOs, or companies and have to create knowledges about Africa.

'Africa and Europe: a joint vision for 2030' (European council, 2022a) and 'EU emergency trust fund for Africa' (European council, 2022a) are created and published by the European Council. They are two graphic representations of how the EU as an institution approaches their relationship with Africa. The EU, and its exclusive nature, is an interesting actor in the historical context between the two continents as it organises the formerly colonising region from the postcolonial period on. 'How EU wants to Leverage €3,35bn into €88bn in investment for Africa' (Alvares et. al., 2016) is an infographic created by EurActiv. EurActiv is a European based publisher specialised in content about the EU and is partially funded by the EU. 'Africa and the EU' (Debating Europe, 2013) is an infographic created by debatingeurope.com. This institution publishes about issues and policies affecting Europe and is funded by third parties. 'Five challenges for EU-Africa relations' (Eu- Playing Catch-Up in Africa, 2014) is an infographic created by the European Centre for Development Policy Management. ECDPM

has an objective of making policies that work for inclusive and sustainable development. Their main funding come from individual EU member states.

Narrative- and visual strategies

Just like infographics create ways of knowing, answering the research question of this project will create new ways of knowing, understanding, as well. The theoretical framework, methods, and data are ‘communicating vessels’, to use Pascal’s law of physics as an analogy. The quest for what method to use, is a quest for what fits the question and infographics best. Therefore, the analysis will be structured by the three main theoretical concepts of us-them narrative, epistemic violence, and Eurocentrism. The underlying assumptions and values of political and ideological power structures will be the main focus. Per theoretical concept, there will be a twofold analysis based on Amit-Danhi & Shifman’s article ‘Digital political infographics’ (2018). Although their analysis is a threefold including a data strategy, I will only use the narrative- and visualisation strategy. The data treatment strategy analyses how data from polls, surveys, and quantified data sets are processed, which are barely used in the infographics of this project. Although certain uses of data will be discussed, the analytic focus will be at the other two strategies. The theoretical concepts will be discussed as both their narration and visualisation in the infographics will be analysed.

The narrative strategy focuses on what ethos or logos the text and the idea of the infographic are built on. Additionally, to a form of discourse analysis on the text in the infographic, the motivation and intention of the infographic will be analysed. Where Amit-Danhi & Shifman divide narratives into issues, people, and processes, current operationalisations will be tied to the theoretical concepts. The us/them narrative is operationalised by ‘grouping’ countries, where individual bodies of land get clustered into new imaginative groups. Language of hierarchy between Europe and Africa is another way of performing the us/them narrative, as well as negative connotation through the labelling of countries. The latter concept also applies to epistemic violence. Moreover, criminalising Africa and language of inferiority are practices that operationalise epistemic violence. Eurocentrism is operationalised by non-applicable or very specific measurements of certain concepts.

The visualisation strategy focuses on choices related to the construction of imagery. This part can be identified as a graphical analysis of which the elements will be linked to the narrative. Visual effects are identified by the size, colour, and placement of the continents, but also specific choices of representation. Visual metaphors

of certain ideas often enact coloniality, as well as representation through pictograms. The depictions of Africa (and Europe) will be analysed for isolation, anonymity, and hierarchy. These concepts can be operationalised by the creation of borders and exclusion of specific countries.

Analysis

The analysis will be structured by the concepts in the theoretical framework and will be studied using the narrative- and visualisation strategy. Narratives and visuals from the selected infographics that tie into the concepts of *us/them construction*, *epistemic violence*, and *Eurocentrism* will be investigated and interpreted in the light of colonial knowledge. The narration and visualisation of these concept are enactments of the coloniality of the relationship between Europe and Africa in knowledge production. As a result, many of the findings will relate to each other.

Us/them

In order to see Africa as the ‘other’, distinct terms are used. The language used to produce an us-them narrative has a specific hierarchy and superiority. EU or Europe is portrayed as an investor (European council, 2022a; Alvares et. al., 2016), funder, and assister (European council, 2022b) in several infographics. By creating a knowledge of Europe being the helper, and Africa being in need to receive that help, a clear distinction is drawn. Isolation and the creation of visual distinctions when depicting Africa enables the us-them narrative to exist. European council (2022b), Alvares et. al., (2016), and Eu- Playing Catch-Up in Africa (2014) display Africa without any other geographical reference. This isolation helps the beholder to imagine Africa as a detached unit and fuels the creation of Africa as a unified *other*.

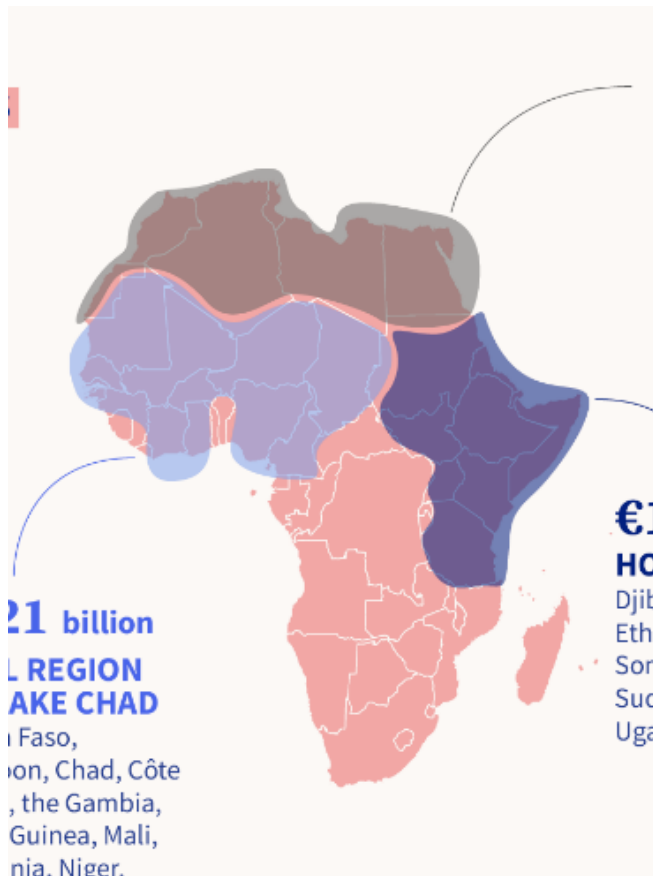


Image 1, an isolated depiction of Africa (European Council, 2022b)

European council (2022a) does display the EU next to Africa, in its geographical location following the Mercator projection. Although this leads to a less isolated depiction of Africa, the difference between us and the *other* is made clear in a different way. All countries in the EU have their borders drawn, giving them identity and individual assertion. Africa is in total absence of borders, ergo in absence of individual identity. Image 2 is a clear example of how a uniform display of Africa contributes to the creation of an *other*.

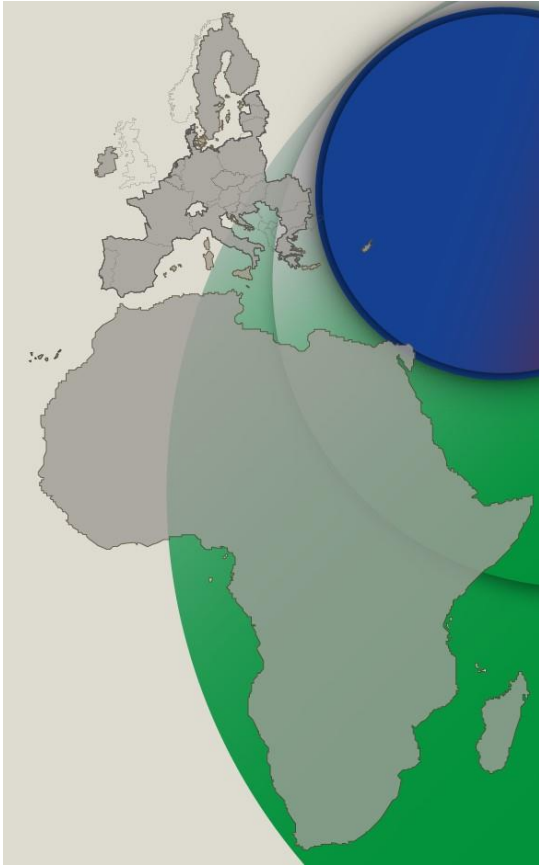


Image 2, Depiction of the EU and Africa with and without borders (European commission 2022a)

The distinction is not always drawn by the same borders. All sorts of different borders are created to form specific country groups. The term ‘sovereign state’ (used in most literature to define these countries) itself is there to create clear divisions between the people in- and outside of it. The clusters of countries created in the infographics are attempts at creating an inside and an outside as well, just with different scopes. For example, first the idea of continents is created, so there is a clear divide between Europe and Africa. Then a union within that continent is created to gatekeep within Europe, leaving out specific ‘European’ countries. Following, a neighbourhood is created of countries that cannot come into the union but are significant enough to keep good relations with. All these groups are formed in just one infographic (Alvares et. al., 2016). The (un)grouping of countries discussed before is also practised visually. European countries that are not in the EU are transparent while the countries in EU and the African Union (AU) have colour in both European council (2022a) (image 2) and Debating Europe (2013) (image 3). There is no clear separation with the colours used as both continents have the same colour (grey and white respectively). The distinction is made when all information in European council (2022a) about Africa carries the green of the African Union flag, while all EU knowledge is displayed with the blue of their flag (image 2). In Debating Europe (2013) knowledge about the EU is surrounded by the same blue

that seems to be taken from the EU flag, yet knowledge about Africa is placed in a brown bubble (image 3). These clear distinctions in colour help to create a clear division between Europe and Africa. Western countries have great power in how groups like EU, UN, and European Neighbourhood are constructed. Setting these different gatekeeping boundaries enables knowledges to narrate an *us* and an ‘other’, and enact the colonial relation.

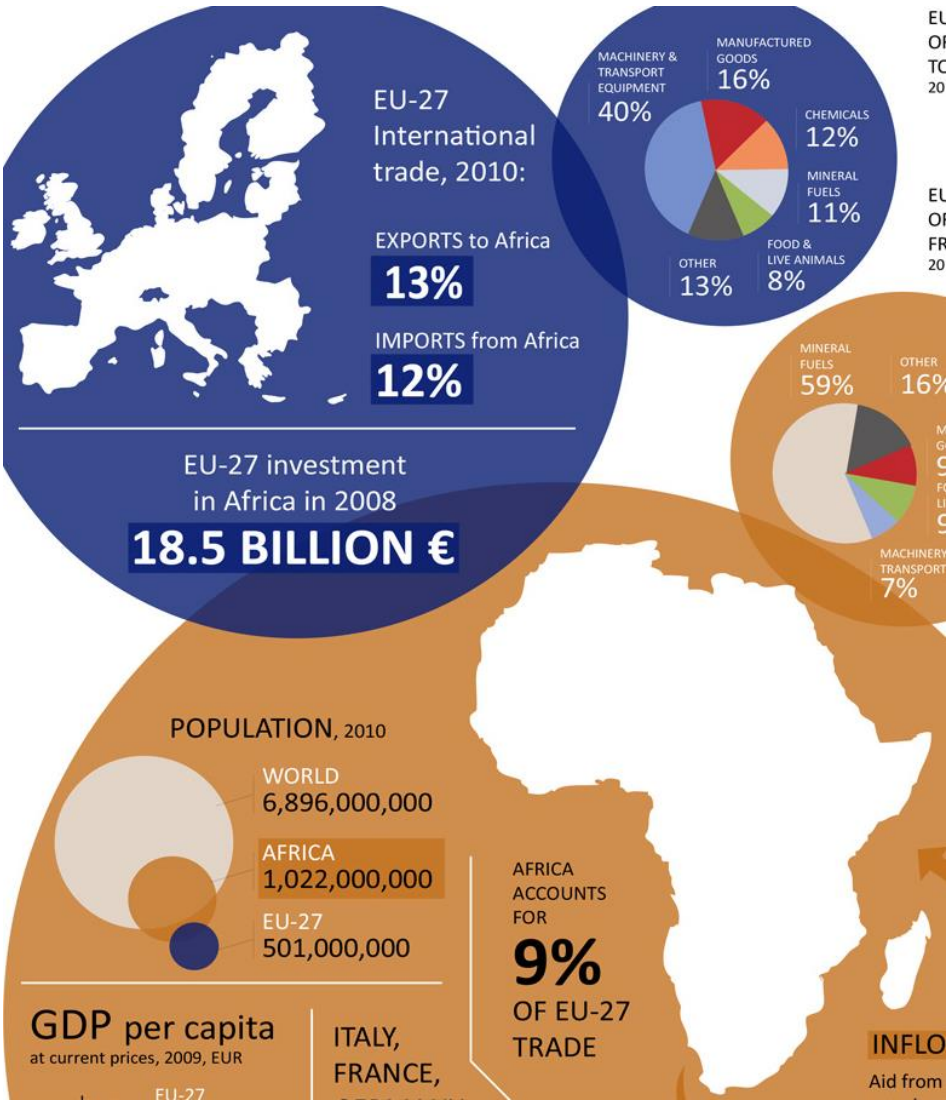


Image 3, exclusion of non-union countries and colour differences, *Debating Europe* (2013)

In some cases, select countries are put into regions like ‘North of Africa’, ‘Sahel region and lake Chad’, or the ‘Horn of Africa’ (European council, 2022b in image 1). Borders of these proclaimed regions are conceptualised by European knowledge in order to fund them or declare emergency over them and control their peoples. New borders are created in order to protect certain conceptualised bodies from inclusion of the ‘other’. The infographic by the European council (2022a) for example narrates ‘Team Europe’ as yet another assemblage of countries next to the likes of EU, Europe, member states, Africa, and the African Union. To give an overview

of the sheer number of created clusters as well as their ambiguity, I have made a diagram. Image 4 presents an overview of the different groups that have been made up between Europe and Africa. It is a compound of the knowledges about country groups that the different infographics create. All made country groups are displayed, except for resource-rich African countries since I could not find a way to fit an extra group in (Algeria, Angola, DR Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Some groups like 'Western countries' are weakly defined. Inclusions in such disputed groups will be done based on how the institution that produced the infographic defines such groups. Making this image confronted me with exactly the issues that this research concerns. There is no neutrality in what countries to in- and exclude in this image. Even when only including European and African countries, as simple as that may seem, political choices need to be made. There needs to be a criterium to decide what countries to include in this overview. I have made the choice to include only countries that are recognised by the United Nations, strictly for practical purposes. As a result, bodies like Kosovo, Vatican City, Western Sahara, and self-governing countries under France or British Crown Dependency will be left out. The countries that I chose to incorporate in the image are by no means selected in order to express a particular stance, although I realise I inevitably do.

Epistemic violence

After the creation of an us and a 'other', an unequal ambiguity in the relation between Europe and Africa arises. On the one hand, the relationship is narrated as equal and cooperative. European commission (2022a) writes about a joint vision, addressing challenges together, cooperation, joint efforts, a partnership and fighting diseases together. On the other hand, a narration is used that creates a helper and one in *need* of help. The elaborations of cooperatively formulated headings in European commission (2022a) describe Europe as the contributor, donor and trainer while Africa is narrated as the recipient of these aids. Several other times EU is presented as an investor in Africa, resulting in an unequal helper-helped relationship. Alvares et. al. (2016) do the same in the formulation of their main goal. 'Helping the private sector in Africa' implies that Africa *needs* help and that it needs to be initiated by an external body like the EU. European commission (2022b) goes as far as suggesting that there is an emergency at hand for which a trust fund needs to be set up by the EU. This narrative is made explicit when 'funding' is followed by 'who benefits' and 26 African countries are the only ones mentioned (image 5).



Image 5, only certain countries are narrated as beneficiaries of the plan, European commission (2022b)

Eu- Playing Catch-Up in Africa (2014) and Alvares et. al. (2016) do not only display Africa isolated, they also use a particular design to depict the continent that violates it. Both infographics show the shape of Africa with the EU star printed over it, while one even colours Africa in EU blue (image 6). This visual representation implies European control, or even a form of ownership over Africa and adds to the colonial identity of the relationship between Europe and Africa.



Image 6, Depictions of Africa with EU design over it (EDCMP, 2014; Alvares et. al., 2016)

In most infographics Africa has green (flag of AU, landscapes) or brown (landscapes) colours, yet European council (2022b) colours the continent is pink (image 1). Pink is used as a calming colour, for passiveness, compassion, and friendship (Cerrato, 2012). The colouring is used to support the helper-helped narrative of Africa being in an emergency in which the EU helps out. This dependency in their relationship is visually displayed furthermore at the end of Alvares et. al. (2016). Africa is displayed as a balloon that is pumped up by a pump that says private sector. At the same time both the EU and individual member states are visualised by two full normally shaped balloons that add up to the Africa shaped balloon. This implies that Africa would be deflated if it was not for the dependency on the EU- member states balloons and the private sector pump.

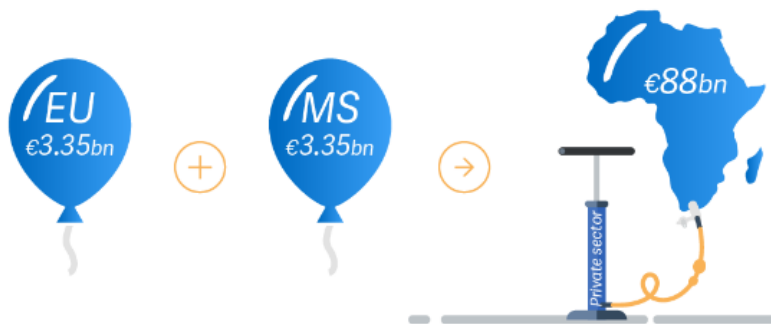


Image 7, Africa as a balloon being pumped up by the private sector; Alvares et. al., 2016

In Alvares et. al. (2016) other problematic visual metaphors are used. A white person, or hand, is visualised as superior. The money growing plants are watered by a white hand. When it comes to opening businesses, a black hand needs to shake a white hand in order to do so. Such images display power and control that lead to a superior perception of the white hand. It also displays that Africa and the black hand, are dependant

on the white hand when it comes to funding and opening up businesses. This dependency is a form of epistemic violence. Furthermore, it creates a knowledge in which the white hand has control over resources. The problematisation of Africa and saviourism of the EU is propagated further with pictograms of the objectives in European council (2022b). The strengthening of communities is visualised by two large hands representing the helper with a family in between. Next, migration management is visualised by a person with an improvised bindle to represent the person's migrant status. This prominent primitivity helps to narrate migration as problematic and Africa as inferior.

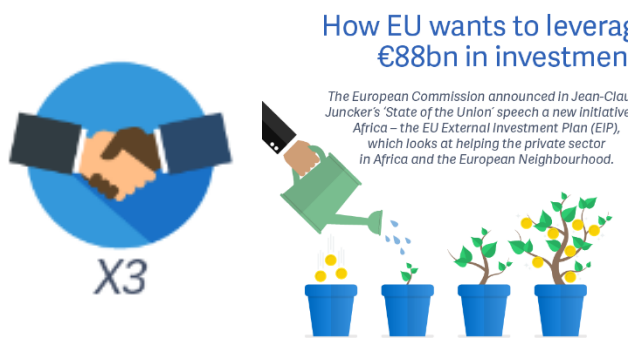


Image 8, white hands in positions of power, Alvares et. al., 2016

Debating Europe (2013) does not show the shares of export and import of trade when they address Africa like they do with EU. Instead 'inflows' and 'outflows' are the terms used for Africa. Inflows in this context are supporting aids from organisations dominated by Western countries. This emphasis on external aid compounds the perception of Africa as in need for help and leaves Western countries as the helpers. It is not to say that there is no need for help or that there is no emergency at hand. It is to say that the problematic narration on Africa contributes to modern day colonial division. Africa is mentioned before the EU in the title but all other texts in this infographic are narrated from an EU standpoint. For example: the EU exports to Africa, and imports from Africa instead of the other way around, creating a dominant position for the EU in the trade relation. Africa here has no in- or export, instead 'inflows' and 'outflows' are addressed when it comes to Africa. Inflows are the supporting aids, and outflows narrate a one-dimensional criminal identity for (sub-Saharan) Africa (image 9). Both sources of outflow are illegal. The knowledge is created that all input into Africa is aid, and all output is labelled as criminal as all information around the African silhouette is directed at aid or criminality.

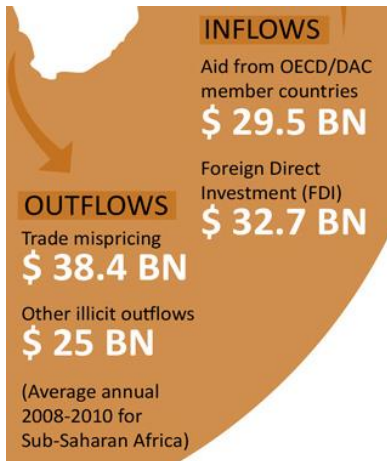


Image 9, criminalised outflows and aid-centred inflows, *Debating Europe* (2013)

Other ways of using problematising terms are found in different infographics. The use of a term like ‘decent job creation’ (European commission, 2022a) implies the indecency of African workforce. An objective like ‘improved government’ (European commission, 2022b) implies that the current government needs improvement. The knowledge of Africa being in a state of negativity is created when such objectives are set. European commission (2022a) writes about global challenges when it is stated that there’s a joint effort to combat instability, radicalisation, and terrorism. Next to this, it is shown that more than 60% of the EU’s security and defence policy is conducted in Africa, implying that there is a lot of instability, radicalisation, and terrorism present in Africa. In European commission (2022b) a corresponding phenomenon occurs when the objectives of the EUTF are set and results that have already been booked are shown. With each objective set, a knowledge is created that Africa has issues in that particular department. If the objective of an emergency trust fund is set on strengthening resilience of communities, the knowing that communities have weak resilience is produced. With the other points the knowledge is created that African regions have bad economic and employment opportunities, governance, and conflict prevention.

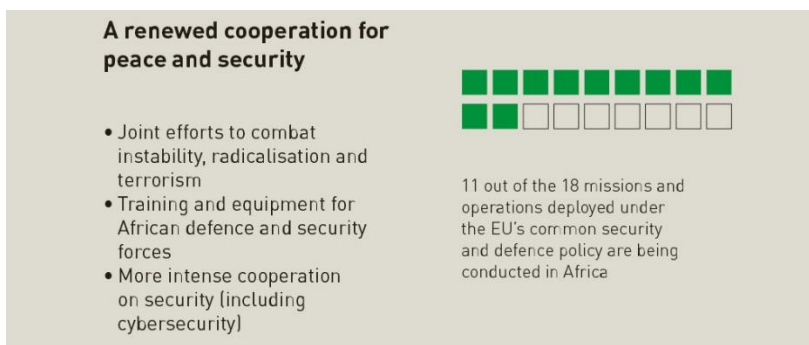


Image10, problematising narration linked to Africa, *European council* (2022a)

The negative connotation of Africa is seen in other infographics as well. European council (2022a) addresses people that are migrating as irregular, illegal, and problematic. Speaking of migration in terms of ‘smuggling’ and ‘trafficking’ criminalises migration and shifts the attention of the issue. Now the problems are not wars or famine, but how people get to Europe. While the partnership for migration is presented as an opportunity, the narration labels migration as criminal and problematic. The problematisation of Africa is done through labelling of countries in Alvares et. al. (2016). Poor, developing, and fragile, are three different terms used to label and give order to countries by their issues. Additionally, labelling countries as such feeds the biased research agenda to only do research on the hardship, underdevelopment, and conflict.

Eurocentrism

Most infographics express development, aid, and the current state of Africa in a monetary way. The issues they discuss are not understandable only through money and it is a Eurocentric practice to try that. Alvares et. al. (2016) use graphic metaphors with visual elements that represent money in some way. The tree that grows has coins as flowers, as its seeds are also coins (image 8). The investments are represented by stacks of coins, as well as the practise of setting up businesses in Africa. Using money to visualise the issues and ‘solutions’ that are in play here, ignores their multidimensional being. The addressed issues have many more dimensions and cannot just be captured by money. Imagining them merely in a monetary way speaks from Eurocentrism and keeps a colonial relationship intact. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is used on different occasions to measure certain phenomena in Africa in a similar practice. European council (2022a) uses GDP to represent development in digital transition, sustainable growth, and decent job creation. Internet connectivity is presented as a way to increase GDP while sustainable growth and job creation are also represented by GDP growth. Debating Europe (2013) displays GDP as a comparative economic measurement between EU and Africa. A measurement like GDP gets applied inappropriately to economies and communities that it is unable to capture. A comparison between the GDP of the EU and Africa marginalises African communities in an unfair fashion.

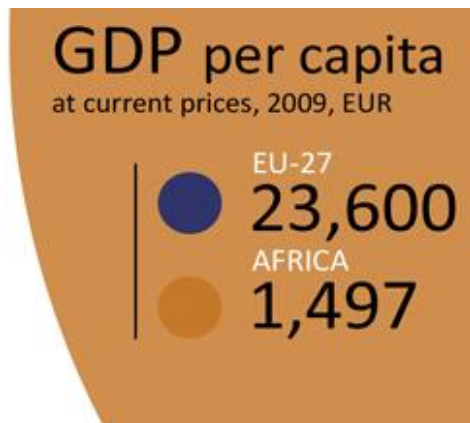


Image 11, an inappropriate GDP comparison between EU and Africa, *Debating Europe* (2013)

In European council (2022b) other Eurocentric measurements get assigned to objectives set by the EU. Western understandings of communal resilience and economic opportunity are applied to African regions when ‘social services’ and ‘nutrition assistance’ are narrated as results of that resilience. Economic opportunities are measured by concepts like job creation and income generation that do not apply well to countries with large informal economies. Informing people about the risks of migration, (in other words, advising against it) is applied as a metric for migration management. This management of migration is treated from a Eurocentric standpoint. In European council (2022a) human development is included in the global gateway investment package but elaborated only with an estimation of how many Africans will enter the workforce within 30 years. Presenting population growth as an example of human development is an example of the inaccurate metrics that get applied to Eurocentric ideas about Africa.

Concluding

In order to answer the question “*How do European created infographics about Africa enact the coloniality of knowledge?*” the narration and visualisation of European created infographics were examined. Overall, the biases of knowledge agendas became clear as almost every infographic covered poverty, sickness, and conflict. The most important practice found concerning the us-them narration is the grouping of countries. Several different groups are created in order to divide an inside and an outside. Many different clusters are created both via language and visual display. The isolation of Africa in its depiction is used in several instances in order to create unity and the feeling of it being different from Europe. Different colours are used in some infographics to divide Europe from

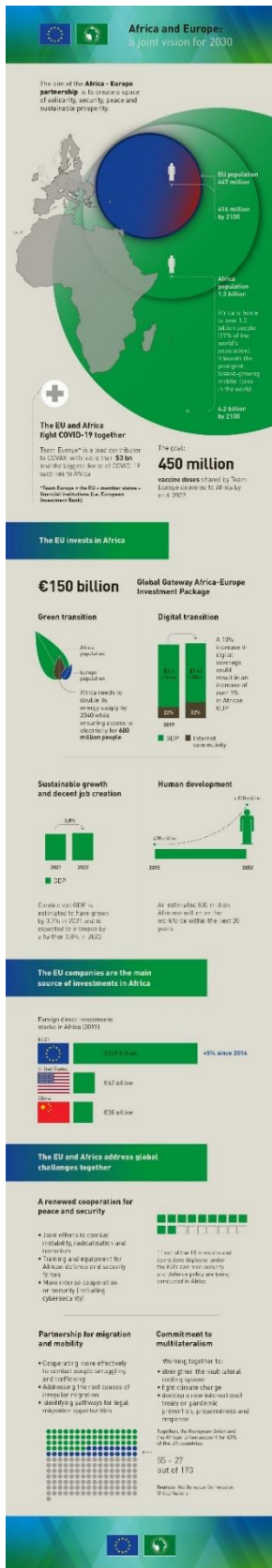
Africa. In one infographic, identifying borders were displayed on the European body, but are lacking in the African body. Other depictions of Africa are covered in EU stars, or even EU blue, implying the ambiguity in the relationship. Furthermore, in an act of division, the relationship of a helper and a helped is created where Africa finds itself as the actor in need of help. This ambiguous relationship gets exploited further in an act of epistemic violence. The created 'other' gets problematised with all inferior appointments of Africa as in need for the discussed help. In one instance, white hands are used to visualise helpers, wealth, and authority. It is such depictions that enact unequal power relations that stem from the colonial age. In other parts, aspects like migration and even economic incomes of Africa get criminalised, problematised, and labelled as irregular. Countries and country groups get labelled as poor, developing, and fragile. This narration continues the ambiguity of a colonial relationship between Europe and Africa. The ambiguity is furthermore displayed when white hands are used to visualise helpers, wealth, and authority. Additionally, a problematic narration describes African jobs as indecent and governments in need of improvement. This could also be attributed to a Eurocentric concept of what governments or economies should be. In other forms of Eurocentrism, GDP is inappropriately applied to Africa in several infographics, sometimes in comparison with Europe's GDP. Examples and results of objectives as migration management and resilience of communities are created Eurocentrically. The pictograms used to represent objectives and results create problematising and Eurocentric conceptions of the issues addressed. More Eurocentrism is expressed in coins/money as a visual metaphor for development and issues and solutions. Applying these inappropriate concepts to Africa puts the continent in a disadvantaged position that recreates unequal colonial dynamics.

Discussion

More of my personal situation could have been elaborated in the introduction and theory while addressing the situatedness of knowledge and its accountability. It would have been interesting to share my personal situation and to explain how through accountability of my theory, data section, and methods of choice my knowledge production could be valuable. Concerning the structure of the analysis, Eurocentrism might not be the ideal term for the concept that I am trying to apply. A more specific term could help me cover and indicate the issue further and make it better interpretable for the reader. Not all motivations and intentions that are behind the infographics were discussed. As most infographics do not display the aim of the project discussed in the report that they are from,

such analysis could result in very insightful information. Lastly, this project only uses five infographics. The content of which is enough to fill the project, yet additional images could show the issues differently and more extensively.

Appendix



European council (2022a)

EU emergency trust fund for Africa

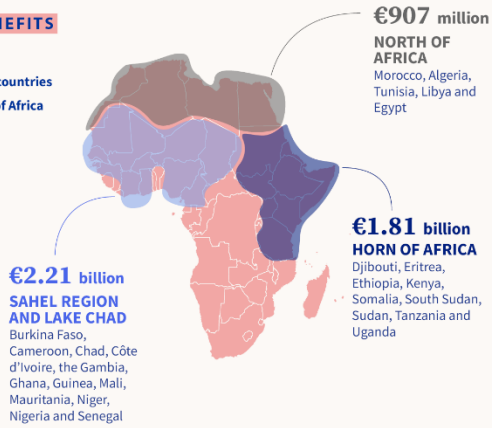
FUNDING

The EU emergency trust fund (EUTF) for Africa pledged over **€5 billion**

So far **€4.9 billion** have been approved for **251** programmes

WHO BENEFITS

26 partner countries in **3** regions of Africa



OBJECTIVES & RESULTS

Strengthening resilience of communities



9.5 million people receiving basic social services

4.4 million people receiving nutrition assistance

Greater economic and employment opportunities



127 800 jobs created

668 500 people assisted in developing income-generating activities

Improved migration management



509 000 migrants in transit and forcibly displaced people protected

2 million people reached by information campaign on risks linked to migration

Improved governance and conflict prevention



2 100 victims of trafficking assisted

1.9 million people participating in conflict prevention and peace building activities

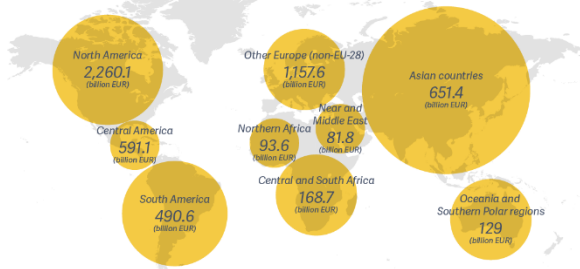
How EU wants to leverage €3.35bn into €88bn in investment for Africa.



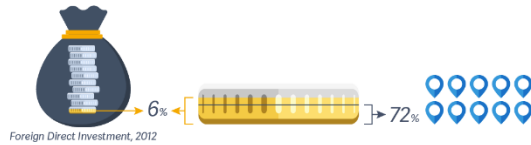
The European Commission announced in Jean-Claude Juncker's 'State of the Union' speech a new initiative on Africa – the EU External Investment Plan (EIP), which looks at helping the private sector in Africa and the European Neighbourhood.

The plan hopes to help meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals agreed in 2015 and boost the decline since the financial crisis of 2008 of foreign direct investment (FDI) to developing states.

Outward stocks of Foreign Direct Investment, EU-28, end 2014



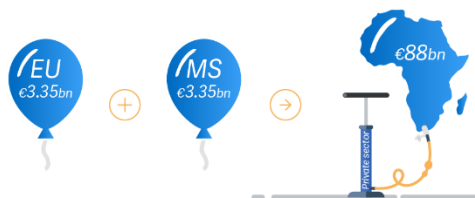
In 2012, only 6% (€ 34.6 billion) of total global FDI to developing countries went to what the OECD calls 'fragile states.' Among those on the fragile states list, the majority of FDI is attracted by resources-rich countries, with 72% concentrated in ten countries in 2012.



Also, the cost of setting up a business in the most fragile African countries is three times higher than in non-fragile African states.



The EIP contains a European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), which will 'blend' contributions from the EU, member states, and the private sector. The EU will put in €3.35bn. Through guarantees, that should be leveraged to mobilise €44bn. If the 28-member states, and other private sector match that €3.35bn – so a total of €6.7bn – then the total leveraged funds available will reach €88bn, the Commission says.



NGOs have noted that little migration occurs from the very poorest countries. It tends to be a by-product as the most fragile states become a little richer. They also worry that the plan could merely underpin Western investment and profits in developing nations, rather than triggering homegrown businesses.



With the support of: BILL & MELINDA GATES Foundation

Alvares et. al., 2016

5 Challenges for EU-Africa Relations



01

Africa and Europe need to rebuild confidence and commitment in the partnership and this summit is an opportunity for dialogue at the highest level to bring about real change - influential leaders on both sides also need to stand up and to make this summit work

Leaders need to come to agreement on core issues of the Joint Africa EU Strategy for the future - Migration, Mobility, Post 2015, Agriculture, Food Security, Climate Change and Trade

02



03

All the partners need to change the mindset and culture of Africa-Europe dialogue, clearly expressing their expectations and interests to realise the ambition of the Joint Africa EU Strategy

We can build, block-by-block, on successes like the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) for a new Africa EU partnership for the future.

04

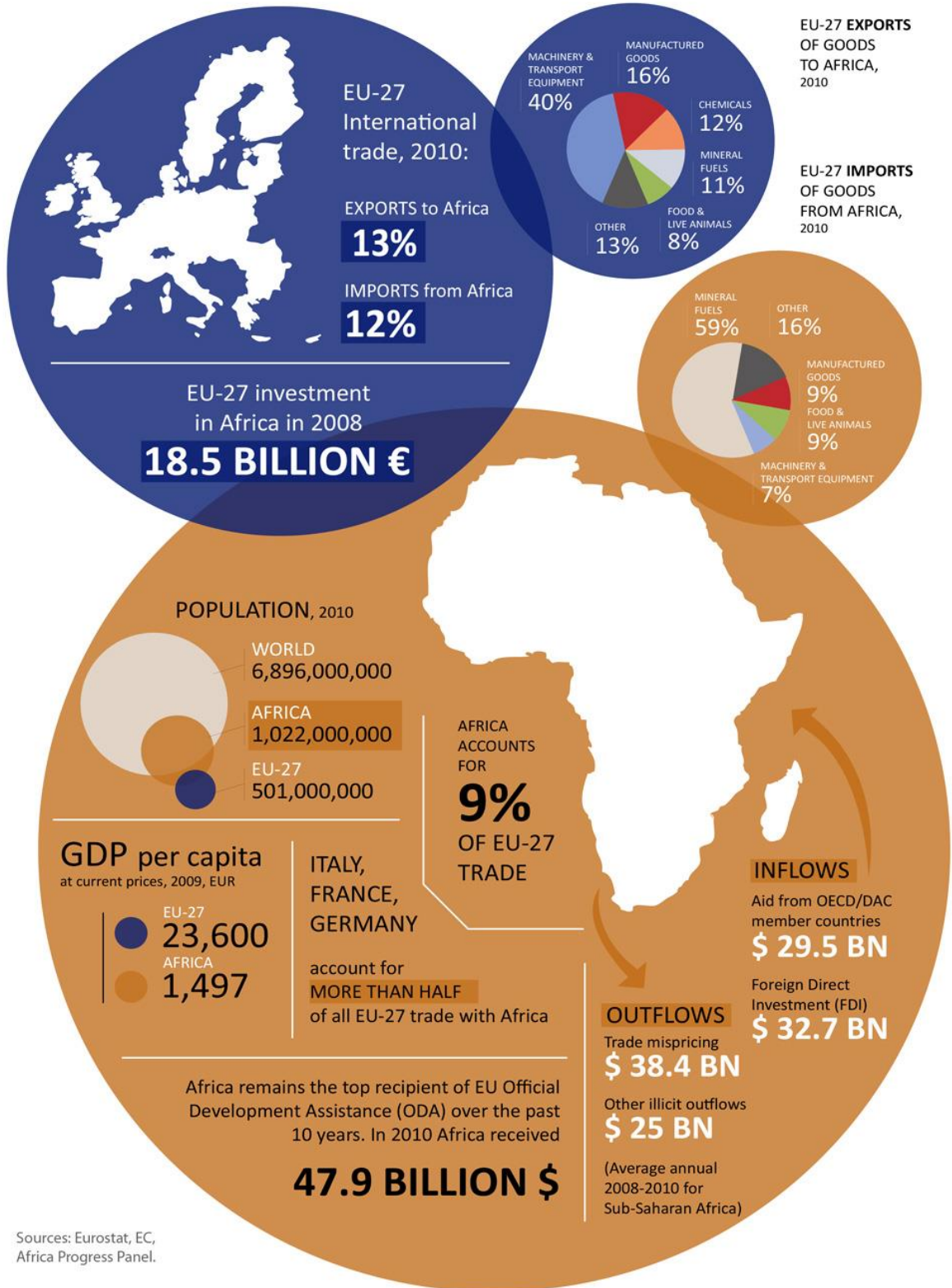


05

Both partners need to find ways to deal with irritants upfront - the Economic Partnership Agreements, International Criminal Court and LGBT Rights in Africa

www.ecdpm.org

AFRICA AND THE EU



Debating Europe (2013)

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