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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POVERTY IN AFRICA USING GIS AS A MAPPING TOOL

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Abstract

Africa is perceived as the poorest continent in the world. Various authors have written on the phenomenon; however, they seem to confuse effects to causes of poverty. This misinformation is always evident in research conducted by foreigners in Africa, rating agencies, etc. In addressing the research question (*How would African poverty be best tackled?*) We found that since African poverty is the legacy of colonisation and divide-and-rule; therefore, Africans need to decolonise their minds which will lead to removing the remnant of colonisation and advance a “Unite-and-build” endeavour.

Introduction

It is a fact that Covid19 has affected the entire globe; however, African origin of poverty stems from the ills of colonisation which still continues indirectly. Coronavirus has augmented a multidimensional poverty rate which started centuries ago as a result of Berlin conference termed “The Scramble of Africa”. We intend to critically assess the cause (s) of poverty in Africa in order to propose interventions that resonate with Africa. We seek to address: *How would African poverty be best tackled?* For decades a lot of work has been done on the phenomenon; however, decolonising the minds requires attention. The paper will implicate all relevant stakeholders who might need a new strategy in addressing the phenomenon. An inductive approach informs the writing style

Methodology

Although GIS has been utilised to collect, analyse and display data; nevertheless, the ontological position of the paper is inductive in nature. In order to address how poverty should be eradicated in Africa, we collected data from readily available online open data for Africa and searched for articles from Google Scholars. We found about 1 290 873 articles; however, only about 8 articles resonated with the study objective. Our search phrases were: poverty in Africa, causes of poverty in Africa, and effects of poverty in Africa. The hybrid of use of theory and empirical data helped us reach final conclusions which resulted in the results.

Results

Drawing on empirical and theoretical considerations, colonisation is responsible for poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. We propose mind decolonisation of the minds to unite and rebuild the walls of “Mother Africa” as discussed below.

Discussion

The two figures below inform the discussion as they demonstrate poverty in Africa in the region and in the global arena.

Figure 1: World Poverty

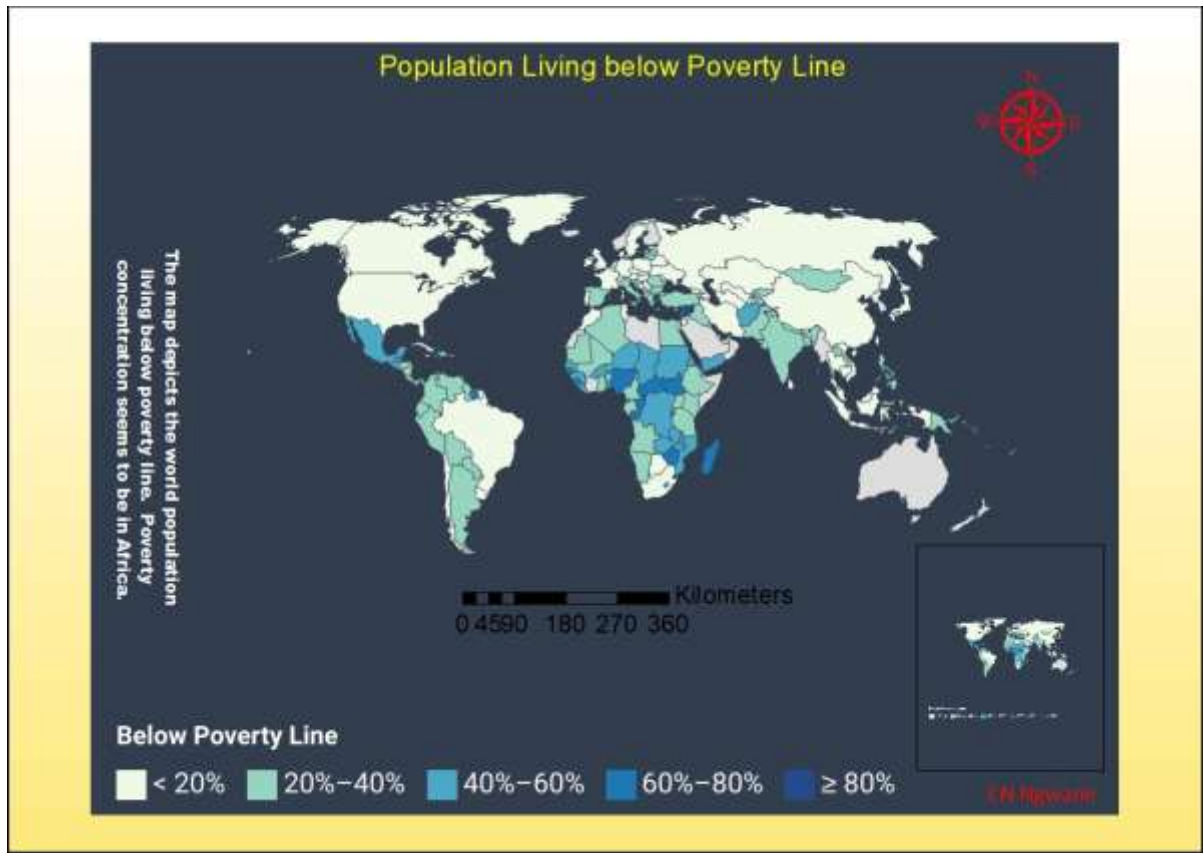
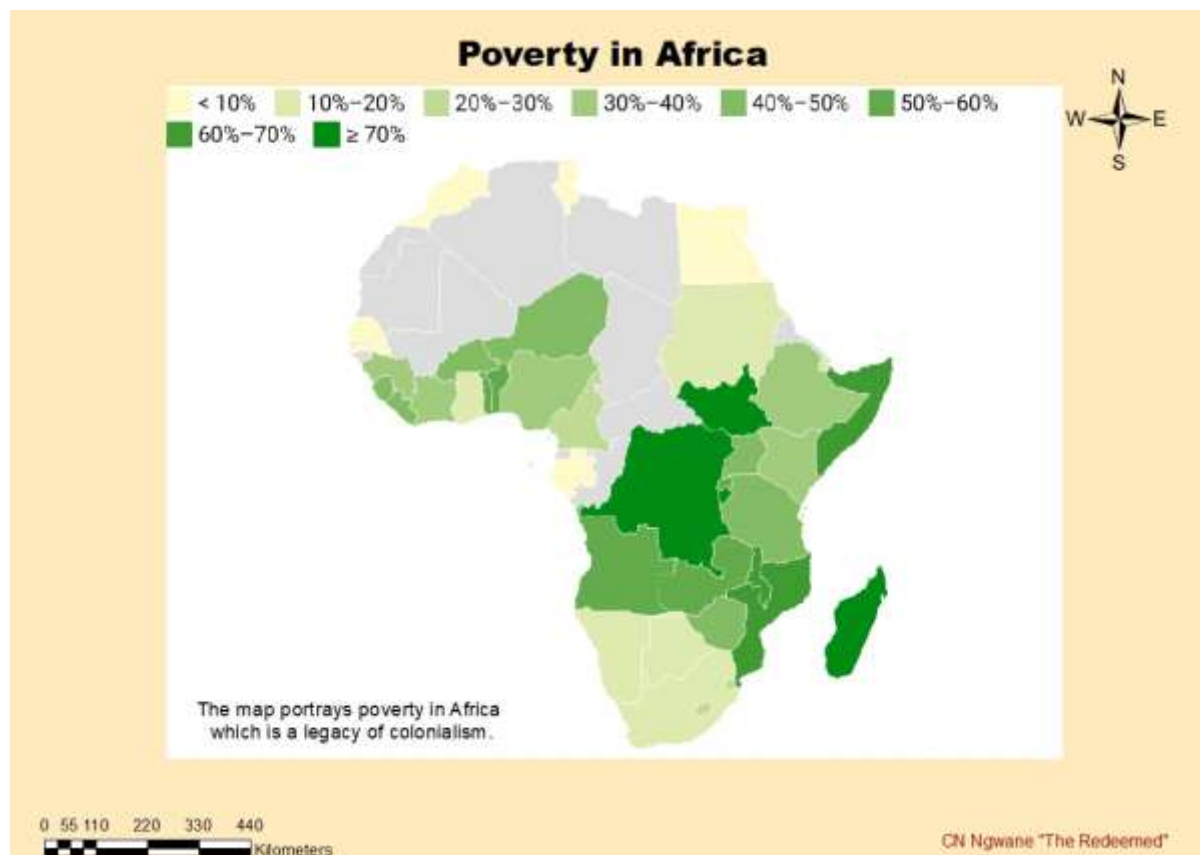


Figure 2: Poverty in Africa



Drawing on Noxolo (2017), decolonial theory sets out a ‘decolonial matrix of power’ which started during the colonial era. Noxolo further contends that it comprises of effective control by the West through religion, education, authority or political power, economy (exploitation of labour and resources and knowledge) (control of institutions and technologies of knowledge including universities, printing press and the Internet). Following the tradition of Settle (1996), Papaioannaou and Michalopoulos (2010) and Bethke (2012), we argue that the 1881 Berlin Conference of the Scramble of Africa which gave birth to colonisation is the genesis of African poverty and underdevelopment and other macro-environment challenges. One fundamental facet of colonisation was a divide-and-rule strategy which fast-tracked and entrenched it in all colonies successfully. In the paper, we challenge an oversight of construing the effects of poverty in Africa for causes as outlined by (Chukwemeka, nd, Korankye, 2015 & Kabuya, 2015). The reason for this could be the premature closure of literature review or empirical data collection or just limited knowledge.

Colonisers had a tendency of making things benefit them. For instance, in the past it was education, civilisation, religion, economy, etc. Now, it is climate change, turn-it-in, etc. These are good things; however, they were manipulated to disadvantage colonies. This premise is confirmed by Morrock (1973) & Noxolo (2017) who assert that religion, politics, trade and education were used to entrench western values while augmenting differences and strife among natives. They would make other

tribes, ethnic groups, races educated rather than others or become Christians while others remained pagans; give some better positions in business or politics. Based on theoretical perspectives, we draw attention to poor education which was dished to Africans which is responsible for poverty and underdevelopment (Morrock, 1973 & Ocheni & Nwanko, 2012). Colonisers produced teachers, clerks, police, interpreters who supported their endeavour of extractionism (Ferretti, 2020). Building on this argument, Eurocentric education clashed with African values and failed to advance entrepreneurship and manufacturing which could have expanded industrialisation. They currently use climate change and similarity check indexes to hinder development. Africans are naïve to realise the plot of colonisation which still continues silently and indirectly. Before they know it, colonial rule would overwhelm Africa again. They use agencies of various kinds to continuously degrade and divide Africa further because they do not want to see Africa become developed.

Congruent to the above ills of colonisation which impoverished Africa is confiscation of about 92% of the arable land yet they formed 1% of the population particularly in South Africa. Theoretical considerations reveal that they drove natives to drought-stricken reserves which hindered farming (Bethke, 2012 & Ocheni & Nwanko, 2012). This resulted in intensified resistance against colonisers and forced them to either leave or hand power to the liberation movement. As noted above, fierce resistance made colonisers poison the land which made it unproductive (Zinkel, 2019). Even before that they had altered soil structure which impacted economic development adversely. The issue of land confiscation has led to the current land grab in South Africa as land reform and restitution policies seem to be inefficient. Crippling farming was done to force Africans into labour market as they required employees. In light of this, colonisers deterred farming intentionally as they knew it was the source of livelihood and measure of wealth in Africa and Africans were extremely wealthy. Western civilisation and development were supposed to build on African wealth, not on landless people with no source of livelihood.

Theoretical considerations suggest that the arrival of colonisers in Africa introduced foreign diseases on humans and livestock. This line of argument is confirmed by Sharp and Hahn (2011) who elucidate that HIV/AIDS traces its origin from the US in the 70s; however, it did not come to the public knowledge until in 1981 when five homosexual males were diagnosed. It then spread across Europe and to other continents; hence, it was initially known as a gay disease which was referred to as a “gay plague”. Resonant to the arrival of foreign diseases, Covid19 started in China in 2019 and spread to the US and Europe. It was then later imported to Africa in March 2020. They tried to hide the true statistics; the disease could not be hidden. There is a tendency of stating that Africa has the highest number of AIDS cases. It cannot be true. That has been proven by Covid19 which hit the super powers hard. This resonates with the sentiment that rating agencies and reporters tend to exaggerate bad things in Africa and hide plenty exceptional things. In good things, they always look for a bad side to report. The discrepancy in African poverty statistics confirms this argument.

It is a fact that God endowed Africa with natural resources, especially South Africa; nevertheless, some mines are still owned by colonisers. Papaioannaou and Michalopoulos (2010) and Ferretti (2020) support this argument by asserting that Extractive colonial institutions caused the underdevelopment as they embarked on extractivism, which benefitted them while disadvantaging the indigenes. Settle (1996) concurs in that the intention of colonisers was to exploit economic,

human and physical resources. Consistent to the argument, Ocheni and Nwanko (2012) echo that the African natural resources benefitted industries abroad; consequently, African economy could not develop as the profit was not sown back rather expropriated. Foreign needs were prioritised over domestic needs. In an extraction quest, colonisers had built road networks to move commodities to their desired destination to be sent abroad (Bethke, 2012). Unfortunately, the roads had not been built to connect villages to cities as colonisers had no intention of developing the colonies.

Moreover, colonial injustice manifested in care free attitude towards long term sustainability. In this context colonisers did not care about sustainable development; hence, they engaged in mass deforestation as their major goal was wealth accumulation (Zinkel,2019). Furthermore, they evidently engaged in environmental degradation. All these acts contributed to increasing poverty of Africans who had to adapt to foreign European lifestyle. Further to colonial injustice, colonisers killed millions of people in asserting their dominion in Africa.

Colonisers keep sending handouts to Africa to maintain control and continue with indirect colonisation. Africa needs to stop taking handouts, rather embrace full independence. Ferretti (2020) confirms this by suggesting that the special attention needs to be paid to the current control of the economy by multi-national companies that seem to be against full decolonisation and independence. Ferretti (2020) further proposes that African emancipation would only be complete once newly independent states cut ties with imperial powers; condemning the role of the IMF and World Bank of controlling their economy and exploitation. Africa needs to unite and refuse to be a dumping site and to be made a perpetual debtor. It is worth noting that there are numerous effects of colonisation and divide-and-rule which are currently evident in Africa. Based on this, as opposed to divide-and-rule, Africa needs “remove shackles of colonialism” and “Unite-and-build”. Most significantly, decolonise their minds as the minds of Africans are still colonised.

Conclusion

Finally, the scramble of Africa through colonialism aborted natural development of African economy and led to severe poverty. The African Union needs to focus on redressing the ills of colonialism. The Union needs to work on uniting Africans as they are fragmented due to divide-and-rule principles. In addition, Africans need to decolonise their mind in order to reconstruct the walls of “Mother Africa.”

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