

# Fighting the Root Causes of Migration or Exacerbating them?

## – “Free” Trade in the post-Cotonou Agreement



*"We are here, because you destroy our countries"*

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## Abbreviations

ACP – African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

AU – African Union

ATN – African Trade Network

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

EC – European Commission

ECOWAS – Economic Community of West African States

EPADP – Economic Partnership Agreement Development Programme

EPAs – Economic Partnership Agreements

EU – European Union

IOM – International Organisation of Migration

OACPS – Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

S&D – special and differential treatment (in trade relations)

WTO – World Trade Organization

## Images

Photo on the title page – [http://www.antifaschistische-nachrichten.de/fileadmin/users/antifana/pdf/2013/an21\\_2013.pdf](http://www.antifaschistische-nachrichten.de/fileadmin/users/antifana/pdf/2013/an21_2013.pdf)

## 1. Introduction

Europe prefers to sign free trade [...] agreements with Africa, but does not want the free movement of Africans. The reason is simple, Europe does not want Africans to recover some of the wealth that has been taken from them through free trade agreements. This issue of migration is an economic war, this is the meaning of Europe's actions towards Africa. (Taoufik Ben Abdallah, member of the African Social Forum, in aBamako, 2016)

Four out of five migrants in West Africa stated that they migrated due to economic reasons when being interviewed by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) in 2018 (Lenz and Maheswaran, 2019, p. 14). This statistic is mentioned here not to simplify the various complex and personal reasons why people decide to migrate, but rather to point our attention to the importance of economic questions in the migration debate.

The public debate about fighting the “root causes of migration” seems to have gained importance in Europe recently, but dates back to 1992, when the Edinburgh European Council appealed for measures to address the root causes of migration (Castles, 2004, p. 218). Strikingly, for improving economic conditions in the countries of origin, the Council proposed liberal trade policies as adequate measures; liberal trade policies such as so-called free trade agreements, which are with the post-Cotonou Agreement again offered as a remedy to “root causes of migration” – but which are simultaneously harshly criticised to rather be a root cause of migration themselves by the opposed front. This paradox can be explained by the old debate on “free”<sup>1</sup> trade versus protectionism (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 121) and the ensuing, still vividly debated question of which kind of policy set brings about what is usually vaguely called economic “development” and is often assumed as an adequate response to the “root causes of migration” (McKeon, 2018, p. 871).

The reason why a rhetoric of tackling the “root causes of migration” gets ever more important in politics, is that it addresses a fourfold interest: 1. It addresses the shift to the neo-populist xenophobic right who feels threatened by migration, 2. The rhetoric meets the interests of European enterprises who profit from a neoliberal “development” paradigm (ibid.), 3. The “development” apparatus as such gets confirmed as a supposed provider of solutions for the global South and 4. Citizens pro reception of refugees might feel their opinion to get considered.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “free” is set in apostrophes in the expression “free” trade because of its misleadingness. Firstly, the dominant “free” trade paradigm as determined by the WTO co-exists with the inherent contradiction of agricultural subsidies in the US and EU and thereby ridicules its own agenda. Secondly, freedom in the term “free” trade is set equal with unprotected competition between economically highly unequal partners: In sum, the freedom to exploit. Thirdly, the first point aggravates the inequality arising in the second point in a way that the already more powerful actor is protected while the less powerful counterpart remains unprotected. In a nutshell, I highly disagree with this liberal understanding of freedom, which is expressed through the apostrophes.

In the dominant public debate in Europe about so-called economic migrants, which tend to be perceived as a threat, the fact that there is even a demand for unskilled workers in many sectors is often neglected (Castles, 2004, p. 211). Lacking legal migration channels for people looking for even temporary work, many young people in search of a decent work have hardly other options than to choose illegal and dangerous channels of migration in search of a better life for themselves and their families (ibid., pp. 209).

Reasons for migration are of course very diverse and need to be taken into account in their whole range. This paper focuses on migration from (West) Africa to Europe for so-called economic reasons and more precisely on the impact on migration of the currently negotiated post-Cotonou Agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)<sup>2</sup>. The debate in this paper is inspired by the slogan of refugee activists in Europe: “We are here, because you destroy our countries” (see cover photo), which invites us Europeans to try to comprehend what we have to do with migration elsewhere. From a critical political economy perspective, economic reasons to migrate such as poverty and inequality have been politically created in the first place, thus I speak of ‘politico-economic migration’. This perspective is confirmed by the former Malian minister and political activist Aminata Traoré: “We refute this distinction between economic migrants and political refugees. We say that we are all victims of war, a war of greed for our wealth [...]” (in aBamako, 2016).

A quite illustrative and widely discussed example of a politico-economic root cause of migration is the phenomenon of land grabbing. Less illustrative is, however, migration caused by long-term structural violence in the forms of poverty and inequality (McKeon, 2018, p. 871). Thus, this paper examines how “free” trade agreements such as the post-Cotonou Agreement contribute to the pauperization of the global South by simultaneously enriching the global North. Yet, we need to be cautious not to create a simplified link between poverty and migration: Because the most poor lack the financial means to migrate, an increase in economic wealth might lead, in the short-term, to more people deciding to invest their means in migration. Only if a certain level of income is reached, migration numbers go back again (Lenz and Maheswaran, 2019, p. 14). Thus, this paper takes inequality rather than abject poverty as a starting point to scrutinize its repercussions on migration, yet without neglecting that there is a strong poverty-inequality nexus.

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<sup>2</sup> In April 2020, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) became the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) following the implementation of the revised Georgetown Agreement (Morgan, 2020).

The focus of this paper is laid on “free” trade in agrarian goods, because this is the sector most people in the global South including (West) Africa work in (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 137). The agricultural sector includes farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk (Traoré, 2008). Our global division of labour with most of the former colonies as exporters of raw materials and agricultural products was established with slave trade and colonialism and is still the persistent trade pattern of most countries in the global South today (Pomeranz 1999, p. 85; O’Brien and Williams, 2003, p. 84; Traoré, 2008).

A post-colonial, post-developmental, critical political economy perspective will shed light on the following research question: Does the trade part of the post-Cotonou Agreement rather fight the root causes of migration as it alleges or rather exacerbate them? In order to answer this question, first of all, the context in which the research question is embedded, namely the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and of European agrarian subsidies is elucidated. Furthermore, a short historical glance on the precursors of post-Cotonou illustrates its postcolonial continuities. The third chapter carries out a document analysis of the latest draft of the currently negotiated post-Cotonou Agreement, firstly with a focus on the discursive appearance and framing of “root causes of migration”, secondly providing a content analysis of the trade parts of the document. One relevant observation is that building on the existing Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) as well as aiming at a facilitation of their concrete implementation and expansion, the post-Cotonou Agreement is a new package for more or less the same “free” trade content of the EPAs. The fourth chapter then theorizes asymmetric power relations in trade as the case between the OACPS and the EU and finally explains how inequality can be considered a root cause of migration.

## 2. The Context of the post-Cotonou Agreement

The first sub-chapter addresses the frame conditions in which the EPAs as well as the trade articles of the post-Cotonou Agreement are embedded: an international trading system based on the WTO. On one hand, a strong “free” trade discourse restricts the leeway of countries of the global South, on the other, exceptions from this discourse are paradoxically a reality on the side of the global North, especially when it comes to agriculture. This paradox was refused to be addressed by the EU during the EPA negotiations, as explained by Dr. Dieye from the Senegalese NGO Enda CACID specialised on trade: The EU refuted the demand to negotiate the abolishment of internal agrarian subsidies, in other words direct agropolitical payments to European producers, by stating that this topic could only be negotiated in a multilateral framework such as the WTO, but not in a bilateral framework such as the EPAs (Dieye, 2014, p.

12). As a partial acknowledgment, the EU promised to refrain at least from using export subsidies for agricultural products exported to (West) African markets (ibid.). Finally, one can say a trade agreement with the propagated aim of eradicating poverty (ACP-EU in Banse, 2016, p. 67), which does not touch upon European internal subsidies has a fault in its design and thus cannot fulfil its promises.

From a post-colonial, historical perspective, the second sub-chapter then takes a short look at the precursors of the post-Cotonou agreement, including the EPAs. The latter are of utmost importance also for the post-Cotonou Agreement as will be proved in chapter 3.2.

## 2.1 The Role of the WTO in Africa-EU Trade Relations

Before the creation of the WTO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was the primary multilateral framework governing trade relations since 1947 (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 126). The GATT articles offered more leeway for certain forms of protectionist measures than the WTO later on, e.g. Article XIX tolerated the implementation of import controls in order to protect the domestic economy in cases of urgency (ibid., pp. 129). Countries of the global North exploited this opportunity especially in the 70s (ibid.). The Uruguay Round (1986-94) firstly introduced a phasing out of tolerated protection of farmers both in the global South and North (ibid., p. 133).

Following the neoliberal trend of a subsequent trade liberalization after the Second World War, with the creation of the WTO in 1995, the liberalization of trade in agriculture and services was further expanded and cemented (ibid., p. 113). In other words, from the 'embedded liberalism' era of the GATT, which followed liberal trade principles, but allowed for managed exceptions to support domestic policy goals (ibid., p. 131), a neoliberal era began with the WTO, mostly undermining the former leeway for protectionist measures. In this current neoliberal trading system, one specific sector which still profits from protectionism especially deserves our attention:

As the agricultural protection and support policies of the global North defend their own national interests, they have been reluctant to liberalise it, even if this goes against their usual "free" trade ideology institutionally anchored in the WTO (ibid., p. 138):

Within the framework of the so-called Doha Round, which began [...] in 2001, tariffs for agricultural products were to be massively reduced, agricultural subsidies were to be completely phased out by 2013, and the economically least developed countries were to be granted largely duty-free and quota-free access to the world market for 97 percent of their products [...] by 2008.

However, none of the subsequent ministerial conferences [...] led to agreement. (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2017)

In 2015, the tenth and last ministerial round took place, where some minor amendments in the agricultural sector were found consent on (Schmieg and Rudloff, 2016, p. 1). However, large-scale local agrarian subsidies like those implemented by the US and the EU were not even put on the agenda (ibid.). In a nutshell, exploiting their de facto veto power in the WTO, the EU and the USA shape international trading rules according to their domestic interests by blocking a consensus in the Doha Round which would be counterproductive for them (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 137). In addition, these veto powers shifted the forum and focused on bilateral trade agreements, like the (post-)Cotonou Agreements (Cissokho, 2014), which will be discussed further in chapter 2.2 and 3.

Absurdly, the EU uses anti-dumping measures to “punish exporters who sell their goods in the EU below the cost of their domestic production (Woll, 2009, p. 282) which is exactly what the EU does to its ACP trading partners. The EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) including the internal agricultural subsidies could not be reformed yet due to the opposition of the EU member states, which are taking the respective lobbying of farmers at the national level into account (Woll, 2009, pp. 286; Schmieg and Rudloff, 2016, p. 2),

During the Uruguay Round (1986-94), states had the possibility to formally register with the WTO, if they preferred to execute penalty payments (Schmieg and Rudloff, 2016, p. 2) instead of respecting the prohibition of subsidies as an infringement of the principle of reciprocity in trade relations. As this was afterwards not possibly anymore, a representative of India spoke about a “historical injustice” (in ibid.) which hinders other countries from also applying agrarian subsidies today.

Apart from this, export subsidies have been abandoned during the tenth ministerial meeting in Nairobi, for the “industrial countries” immediately, for the “developing countries” until 2018 and for the so-called least developed and food importer countries until 2030 (ibid.). The West African farmers network ROPPA (2014) highlights that this was no serious concession by the EU as it was agreed upon multilaterally since 2005 in Hong Kong anyway and further that the internal subsidies leading to dumping would be the real issue.

Until today, notwithstanding its negative impact on Southern economies, the major agricultural export products are highly protected in the countries of the global North (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 138). As a consequence, the highly subsidised domestic production of agricultural goods in the EU (and the USA) results in lower world prices which harm especially farmers in the global South who cannot compete with subsidized large-scale industrial farming



of the global North (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 138). On the national level, high tariffs and domestic support to agriculture further negatively impact those countries of the global South who are primary commodity exporters (ibid.). In sum, the global South suffers significant financial losses due to the continued subsidies of European farmers (Matthews in ibid., p. 123).

This major policy concern of European agricultural subsidies damaging the Southern economies has not been left untried to challenge. In 2003, the cotton initiative, spearheaded by four West African cotton producer countries submitted a paper to demand the end of the global North's cotton subsidies as well as financial compensation for the losses attained through the subsidies. This initiative which could have been a ground-breaking model for agricultural subsidies in general failed rigorously (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 138).

An Oxfam report (2002) points out that the global trading rules as governed by the WTO favour the interests of rich countries and transnational corporations on the cost of the interests of the economically poorer nations (Watkins, 2002, p. 6). Fundamental reforms would be needed to overcome this bias and thus effectively combat inequality (ibid.). More precisely, Oxfam (2015) calls for a "strong fair rules-based and multilateral trading system". The question of why it is so difficult to change the WTO rules even though one country has one voice in this forum (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 145) needs further scrutinization which is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 2.2 A Short History of the post-Cotonou Agreement

The post-Cotonou Agreement which is currently negotiated in its end phase, as well as its precursor, the Cotonou Agreement, were negotiated between the European Commission representing the EU and the ACP secretariat, which became the OACPS this year, representing the 79 ACP countries (ACP Secretariat in Banse, 2016, p. 66). The history of OACPS-EU relations in trade has been elucidated in detail elsewhere (see Banse, 2016, pp. 68). In a nutshell, the precursors of the post-Cotonou Agreement, the so-called Lomé treaties, date back to 1975, whereas mainly the former French colonies with the Yaoundé Agreements already had trade treaties with the EWG, the precursor of the EU, in 1963, only shortly after their independences (ENDA tiers monde in Banse, 2016, p. 68).

Furthermore, bilateral so-called "agreements of cooperation" between France and its former African colonies needed to be signed as a condition for the African independences. In these treaties, preferred French access to African resources was secured and further specific unequal trading rules were determined, including the obligation of the African parts to stick to using the neo-colonial currency CFA franc (Pigeaud and Sylla, 2018, pp. 28). This shows the potential of added value of post-colonial analyses on a country and/or currency union level

which could help to get a deeper comprehension of the history and present of unfair trading rules between unequal trading partners.

With the Cotonou Agreement being signed in 2000 (Hurt, 2003, p. 161), so five years after the creation of the WTO, compatibility with WTO rules played a central role in its design, also in comparison to its precursors (Banse, 2016, p. 74). Although non-discrimination and reciprocity are together with transparency and multilateralism the key principles of both the GATT and the WTO, there has been a possibility to get special and differential treatment (S&D) for countries of the global South since 1965 (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 140). Interestingly, for this paper's critical stance on "free" trade, "[t]he demand for special and differential treatment (S&D) was based on the claim that the demands of development are incompatible with the free operation of market forces" (ibid.). This heterodox statement acknowledges that "free" trade does not lead to "development", which will be discussed further in chapter 4.1.1. With the creation of the WTO, the special treatment clauses were suddenly conceived as a problem to "free" trade, which needed a new set of rules (see Banse, 2016, pp. 70). This shift from assuming that the global South needs protection from the global North in order to economically get stronger to assuming that liberalisation brings about economic "development", can be explained by the hegemony of neoliberalism (Hurt, 2003, p. 161). This hegemony is achieved through a mix of consent and coercion, as understood from a neo-Gramscian perspective (ibid., p. 163). Consequently, the S&D clauses were reduced to provisions which are largely fruitless so that there is hardly any consideration of the unequal conditions of countries engaging in trade anymore (O'Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 140).

The WTO granted the EU and the ACP states a waiver for their non-reciprocal trade relations until 2007, meaning they could use this time for a gradual reduction of barriers to "free" trade with the aim of trade relations which are conform to WTO rules (Banse, 2016, p. 78). As a consequence, the EU demanded from the ACP countries to abolish their import tariffs on European products – corroborated by the argument of equal treatment of the ACP states and other so-called developing countries (ibid., p. 79). The waiver was especially targeting those states classified as "developing countries", because they would lose certain non-reciprocal trade advantages that those classified as "least developed" countries could still profit from (ibid.). This led among others to a division of ACP states into two groups with different interests and to the decision of e.g. Ghana to ratify an interim EPA (ibid.).

The drastic effect of the cutting of import tariffs gets clear, when looking at the share of state revenues import tariffs bring to African state households: approximately one quarter (Bilal and Roza in ibid., p. 80). In an interview by [bilaterals.org](http://bilaterals.org) (2017), the Coordinator of the

Senegalese Coalition "No to EPAs", Guy Marius Sagna, elaborates on what this economic policy of abolishing import tariffs would mean to the population:

These losses will reduce education, health or safety budgets. Yet these countries face food, health or safety challenges. Moreover, these European goods will become much more competitive than they already are, compared to local goods. As a result, there will be closures of SMEs [Small and Medium enterprises] and dismissals, and our farmers will become poorer. We can therefore expect an increased migration crisis. (own translation)

Albeit the EU mentioned compensation for these kinds of losses, the African Trade Network (2018) calls this an empty promise. Besides, such a mechanism would only deepen dependence on aid payments (Banse, 2016, p. 80). To conclude, local production of agrarian (and non-agrarian products) would be threatened even more by European concurrence, if either the EPAs or the post-Cotonou Agreement explicitly building on them are ratified (ibid.).

The most influential areas of the Cotonou Agreement were indeed the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), its economic pillar (Banse, 2016, p. 77). According to Banse's (2016) analysis of both the content and the negotiation process of the EPAs, they consist of classical "free" trade agreements and not agreements for "development" as alleged by most EU partners (p. 77).

This finding is confirmed by the fact that an Economic Partnership Agreement Development Programme (EPADP) has been successfully negotiated by West African politicians as add-on to the "free" trade focus of the regional EPA for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Langan and Price, 2015, p. 263). Conversely, following this logic which became a consensus between the negotiating parties, this would mean that without this additional program, the "'development dimension' of trade" (ibid.) will not be realized. Notwithstanding, Langan and Price (2015) criticise the idea that more funding in forms of the EPADP could be a remedy to the problem of asymmetric power relations in trade when flanked by the premature liberalisation of the EPAs: "Any aid resources gained within an EPADP would likely pale in comparison with the negative impacts of a fully-fledged free trade agreement" (ibid., p. 283).

In addition to a financial and economic pillar, the Cotonou Agreement also officially consisted of a, in comparison to its precursors new, political pillar (ECDPM in Banse, 2016, p. 74). Although political conditionalities had been tied to the older treaties as well (Hurt, 2003, p. 162), only with the Cotonou Agreement, migration politics entered trade agreements between the EU and the ACP states (Banse, 2016, p. 74).

Banse (2016) interprets the Cotonou Agreement as both a continued conditionalization of neoliberal “development” aid and a trade policy geared towards geo-political and economic interests of the EU (p. 68). She emphasizes that this constellation gets possible via unequal power relations between the economically strong EU and the economically weaker ACP states (ibid.). Pressure on the ACP states to sign and ratify the EPAs was put especially via the WTO waiver in 2007, but also via adapting the rhythm of financial aid disbursements to the EPA negotiation rounds (ibid., p. 111). The applied partnership rhetoric can merely hide this asymmetric power positions of the negotiating partners (Hurt, 2003, p. 162).

“Due to the relentless resistance from ever widening circles of citizens in ACP countries and in Europe, as well as by ACP governments and inter-governmental organisations worldwide, the EU has been partially frustrated, with only patchy outcomes of the EPA negotiations” (African Trade Network, 2018). Resistance against the EPAs has been carried out by a wide range of actors and by diverse strategies. To elaborate on all these would be beyond the scope of this paper (see Dembélé, 2007; ROPPA, 2014; TWN Africa, 2004; Cissokho, 2014; TNI, 2007; Kokutse, 2008; Socialist Youth, 2008; CONCORD, 2016; *afrique-europe-interact*, 2015), but I would like to highlight that resistance has been organized in manifold ways, suggesting that this probably also prevented that most of the EPAs have been signed and ratified (see McKeon, 2018, p. 882).

As a result, only a few ACP countries have (usually provisionally) implemented the EPAs. In the ECOWAS, these are only two: Côte d’Ivoire in 2016, but with effective liberalisation only in December 2019, and Ghana in 2016, but with the liberalisation of tariffs only in 2020 (European Commission, 2020). The different EPA agreements have different trade clauses so that we can speak of a fragmentation of the ACP-EU partnership (Pichon, 2019, p. 3).

### 3. The post-Cotonou Agreement

The Cotonou Agreement expired in February 2020 (Pichon, 2019, p. 1). Currently, transitional agreements are at place (ibid., p. 10). The post-Cotonou Agreement is negotiated at this very moment and will last for 20-25 years (Barbière, 2018). After the text is agreed upon this year, the agreement needs to be signed and ratified to be implemented on a legally binding basis (Pichon, 2019, pp. 1). It consists of five thematic areas: “green transition; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility” (European Commission, 2020), which are addressed in a common foundation agreement and three specific agreements with the subregions (Pichon, 2019, p. 1).

Having been mentioned in article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement already (*ibid.*, p. 3), migration becomes ever more important with this new agreement, but is a difficult issue to find consensus on especially for the African partners and the EU (Morgan, 2020). The attempt of an integration of highly controversial migratory topics like the readmission of migrants (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 49), which have failed to be successfully negotiated with most African states on a bilateral level so far, is especially remarkable.

The first sub-chapter 3.1 builds on a document analysis of the latest draft of the post-Cotonou Agreement (from June 2020) with a focus on “root causes of migration”, while the second sub-chapter takes the parts on trade in goods in the agreement as a focal point to give a meaning to the expression “root causes of migration”.

### 3.1 The Role of Tackling the “Root Causes of Migration” in the post-Cotonou Agreement

In the most current draft of the post-Cotonou protocol, it is confirmed that migration has stayed among the most controversial issues, which are still debated in this late negotiating phase (OACPS-EU, 2020, pp. 49; 118).

One of the articulated objectives of the post-Cotonou Agreements is to “implement a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration, so as to reap the benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration and mobility and stem irregular migration while addressing its root causes in full respect of international law and EU and national competences” (*ibid.*, p. 5). This quote elucidates how different interests in the migration debate are tried to be reconciled in the agreements: the interests of the countries of the OACPS in fostering legal migration to the EU as well as the EU interests in reducing irregular migration to the EU. Similar as the term “development”, the term “root causes of migration” is blurry enough to unite both interest groups, at least at this abstract level.

In the post-Cotonou Agreement’s section about migration and mobility, there is one very short article with the title “Root Causes of Irregular Migration”, which is already approved by both parties. The paragraph succeeds in not defining neither which root causes they mean, nor with which strategies these could be fought: “The Parties confirm the shared political commitment to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement and to develop adequate responses [...]” (*ibid.*, p. 48). When looking at the African regional protocol, in contrast to most other general articles, the root causes of migration are not taken up with a separate article (*ibid.*, pp. 118). It is only shortly mentioned that cooperation and dialogue shall happen in regard to “stemming irregular migration and tackling its root causes”

(*ibid.*). What is however notable is that the “root causes of migration” seem to be inextricably discursively linked to irregular migration in both formulations creating the impression that legal and illegal migration happen with very different motivations, which can be criticised for its oversimplification.

In conclusion, the term “root causes of migration” remains completely empty in the post-Cotonou Agreement, disclosing it as a rhetorical device of European politicians to calm both its leftist as well as its rightist citizens, which discloses the concept finally as apolitical and Eurocentric (McKeon, 2018, pp. 876).

### 3.2 The Content of post-Cotonou concerning “Free” Trade

Most importantly, the post-Cotonou Agreement postulates to build on the existing EPAs and to support their concrete implementation (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 35). References to the WTO rules are widespread (*ibid.*, pp. 35). In addition, the signatories of the preliminary EPAs confirm that they head for a full implementation of the EPAs, its scope is supposed to be broadened and new signatories are to be encouraged (*ibid.*, p. 36). In a nutshell, as the EPAs failed in most countries and time passes by, the EU starts a renewed trial to conclude the EPAs via the post-Cotonou Agreement.

According to the African Trade Network (ATN) (2018), the ACP institutions entered the negotiation for the post-Cotonou Agreement relatively unprepared so that the ATN is not surprised that the ACP countries followed the negotiating agenda of the EU instead of proposing an own and truly transformative agenda (*ibid.*).

The post-Cotonou Agreement postulates to “build on existing preferential trade arrangements” (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 82), i.e. it refers to the situation after the WTO waiver in 2007, where only the so-called least-developed but not the so-called developing countries can profit from preferential access to European markets. Apart from this, “free” trade is at the very core of the agreement: “The Parties shall stimulate market development [...] and prioritise the removal of unnecessary barriers and constraints facing exports between Africa and the EU” (*ibid.*, p. 82). Even “environmental and social measures should not be used for protectionist purposes” (*ibid.*, p. 34), which lets one frown at least in times of an ongoing climate and inequality crisis.

Part of what is new in the post-Cotonou Agreement in comparison to its precursor is the paragraph on “Blue economy and fisheries” (*ibid.*, p. 83). With post-Cotonou, this part of the agricultural sector shall be further taken over by (foreign) direct investment: “The Parties agree to promote sustainable and responsible investment in the blue Economy” (*ibid.*). What is

still to be negotiated, is the OACPS suggestion to include: “The Parties shall improve competitiveness of [African] maritime industries”, which reflects their concern that similar to the rest of the agricultural sector, the African rather small-scale fish industry is not competitive with foreign companies doing an industrialised fishing with huge trawlers. Analogue to land grabbing, such a facilitation of “fish grabbing” which robs people in the agricultural sector, both farmers and fishers, of their livelihood, will certainly create or in some countries exacerbate root causes of politico-economic migration.

#### 4. The Impact of “Free” Trade Articles in the post-Cotonou Agreement on Exacerbating Root Causes of Migration

The first subchapter deals with the question of how asymmetric power relations in trade veiled by a “free” trade rhetoric result in an increase of inequality. The second subchapter then explores how inequality can be considered a material root cause of migration. Both together examine the hypothesis that the asymmetric power relations in trade manifested in the post-Cotonou Agreement reinforce an existing root cause of politico-economic migration, which is based on the WTO regime.

##### 4.1 Asymmetric Power Relations in Trade as a Cause of Inequality

“[D]espite the claims of standard neoclassical economics, trade theory is ideological and political” (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 126). Different trade theories justify different economic policies and systemic trade arrangements. Thus, it is of utmost importance to analyse the underlying ontologies of each trade theory and their practical, sometimes less clear-cut applications, as will be shown with the example of the EU.

According to Woll (2009), the European Commission (EC) does not follow a clear tendency for liberalization, but rather for pan-European consent (p. 285): “The EU’s common commercial policy results as much from producer demands as it does from the complex decision-making procedures, the institutional self-interest of public actors, and the power struggles created by their interaction” (ibid., p. 294). Due to these complex and intermingled interests, the result is not a clear only liberal or only protectionist outcome, but a combination of both.

The liberal share of the EU’s external trade policy is rather recent and follows an era of national protectionism in many sectors in the 70s and 80s (ibid., p. 284). With the CAP,

protectionism in the agricultural sector is still at place. Therefore, Hurt (2003) calls it ironic that the EU dismisses the advantages of protectionism when it comes to their trading partners and instead joins the omnipresent canon that liberalisation is indispensable for poverty eradication (p. 170). In the EPAs, which again are explicitly built on in the post-Cotonou Agreement, only the liberal share of the EU's policies appears (see chapter 3.2), while the protectionist share of the EU policies functions via the CAP and is protected by the WTO (see chapter 2.1). Consequently, it becomes evident that the far more powerful EU profits from both: on the one hand protectionism of their agricultural sector and on the other "free" trade, in other words relatively unprotected access to ACP markets. In the following, it will be dealt firstly with the neoliberal and secondly with the protectionist share of EU policy towards the ACP countries.

#### 4.1.1 The Neoliberal Share of EU policy towards the OACPS

This chapter starts with a summary of the material consequences of the EPAs, followed by an overview on the (neo)liberal perspective, then introduces the neo-Marxist concepts uneven development and unequal exchange expanded by a post-development perspective, further adopts a postcolonial perspective on the global division of labour while drawing back on and critically assessing so-called free trade policies between the EU and the OACPS in the post-Cotonou Agreement.

The content of the EPAs as well as their material consequences have been critically analysed elsewhere (see Langan and Price, 2015; Vicente 2007; Traoré, 2008; Cissokho, 2014; Concord 2016). In short, notwithstanding the Cotonou Agreement's commitment to poverty eradication (article 1) (Pichon, 2019, p. 2), it is widely criticised that with the EPAs or likewise post-Cotonou 1. big EU companies could flood the African continent with ever cheap products thereby harming local production, 2. cutting tariffs will diminish government income urgently needed for government investments in crucial public sectors (Ighobor, 2014), 3.

deindustrialisation and job losses will result from its "free" trade politics (Langan and Price, 2015, pp. 283) and 4. the EPAs would have a negative impact on intra-African trade (Pichon, 2019, p. 3).

In a reflection paper by the European Commission (2017), their ontological position of neoliberalism gets transparent, when they argue with the neo-classical theory of comparative advantage: "Countries can produce more for less by specialising in what they do best and exploiting economies of scale in global markets" (p. 7). According to this liberal stance, which is the dominant stance in modern trade theory, "free" trade benefits everyone (O'Brien and



Williams, 2020, pp. 121). The idea of a mutual benefit and mutual interests from economic relations is also stressed in the post-Cotonou Agreement draft (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 27). Yet, critics see this partnership rhetoric as a commitment only on the discursive and not on the material level: “The entire history of the official discourse of EU-ACP development co-operation can be dismissed as, to a large degree, false rhetoric that is subsumed by the realities and power relations of the international political economy” (Hurt, 2003, p. 174).

In contrast to the orthodox neoliberal ontology, according to the neo-Marxist perspective of Bieler & Morton (2014), “free” trade policies strengthen unequal exchange as well as uneven and combined development (p. 35). From a post-development perspective, I would suggest using the term inequality instead of ‘uneven development’, simply because the latter implies a solely economic and teleological understanding of “development” (Ziai 2001, pp. 34). Besides, the term “development” underemphasizes historical and current power relations like the role of colonialism during which the countries of the global South were transformed into export-oriented economies via plantation systems based on slave labour. These historical path dependencies shape the global division of labour until nowadays, when the global South largely remains dependent on exports of natural resources. In sum, mainstream economists usually overlook that their neoliberal concept of comparative advantage are situations which have been historically created (Frank in O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 125). Consequently, “[u]neven development [...] has locked countries into relations of unequal exchange”, where the products being exchanged have unequal production prices due to different labour costs and differences in productivity (Bieler and Morton, 2014, pp. 38). This is exactly why I speak of unequal trading partners, which have to compete with each other unprotected under the neoliberal “free” trade system manifested in the post-Cotonou Agreement. However, this insight is not new: Already in 1980, Shaikh emphasized that “free” trade directly causes uneven development, or in other words inequality (in *ibid.*, p. 41). In a nutshell, from a post-developmental, neo-Marxist perspective on trade, a social justice perspective (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 125) is brought forward.

So-called free trade policies intend to open up new markets in other countries and thereby integrate them into an expansionary capitalist world economy (Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 36). This can be called “free trade imperialism” (Kiely in *ibid.*, p. 41). The capitalist mode of production is characterised by exploitative wage labour and private means of production and gets spread via “free” trade policies (Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 36). Part of the capitalist growth imperative is “primitive accumulation” (Luxembourg in *ibid.*, p. 37) resulting in the dispossession of peasants or more illustratively land grabbing.

The history of the capitalist global division of labour explains how the African continent as well as other former colonies got trapped into the production of goods whose value decreases over time (O'Brien and Williams, 2003, p. 84). This constellation of an entrenched global division of labour where the global South remains an exporter of agricultural products leads to a situation in which 80 percent of the people suffering from malnutrition live in those countries that provide over 70 percent of the global food supply (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018, p. 176). As a corollary, we need to acknowledge that cash crops, whose production are a clear-cut colonial continuity (McKeon, 2018, p. 872), produce hunger, a repercussion of the poverty-inequality nexus, with farmers and agricultural labourers themselves making 70% out of the undernourished (Figueroa-Helland et al., 2018, p. 176). In this regard, "development" cooperation is not innocent, as it had financed the specialization on single export crops like rice, cotton and groundnuts, e.g. right after the independence of Senegal (McKeon, 2018, p. 873). Additionally, the colonial continuity of cash crops had a negative impact on gender equality enduring until today: While men took the money-earning role selling cash crops, women continued with an increased workload of domestic non-paid subsistence agriculture (ibid., p. 872). This is how "[c]olonialism and the cash nexus also generated new socio-economic inequalities" (ibid.). The African Trade Network (2018) paints an even bigger picture by stating that "inequality among and within nations [is] particularly related to class- and gender-based power relations and monopoly over economic resources". Beyond, the relevance of structural economic transformation is also recognized in the pre-amble of the post-Cotonou Agreement draft (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 3), but unfortunately without adequately addressing this big challenge with concrete measures to change this division of labour further cemented via "free" trade, which is detrimental to the global South.

In contrast to the liberal idea that "free" trade would always automatically result in a win-win situation for all trading partners, material analyses of the consequences of trade liberalisations in the 80s and 90s have shown an increase in unemployment and a decrease in wages in Africa and Latin America (War on Want in Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 40). Both factors can be regarded as classical factors motivating people to migrate for economic reasons (Traoré, 2008). An even stronger import dependence and deindustrialisation have been the further effects of such trade liberalisation policies and agreements (Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 40). Big transnational corporations (TNCs) have a strong "competitive advantage" (Shaikh in ibid., p. 40). Thus, TNCs have a vested interest in trade liberalization, while small and medium enterprises, especially from the global South, have a vested interest in protecting themselves from this global and omnipotent concurrence. Aminata Traoré (2008) further draws our attention to the gender dimension of "free" trade agreements: Women would be concerned

even more by the repercussions, due to their central role in providing household needs for food, drinking water, domestic energy and health care. “In any case, the free trade approach [...] does not necessarily benefit less developed countries, and may indeed lead to impoverishment of some groups“ (Castles, 2004, p. 221).

In the end, agreeing with Gibb, the root cause of this detrimental neoliberal approach in the (post-)Cotonou Agreement are the WTO rules (in Hurt, 2003, p. 174). Instead of perceiving them as immutable, we need to acknowledge their political production and thereby also the potential to alter them politically (ibid.).

#### 4.1.2 The Protectionist Share of EU policy towards the OACPS

Protectionism can take the shape of tariffs or non-tariff barriers such as quotas, subsidies, currency controls, administrative regulations and voluntary export restraints (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 120). For the EU’s protectionism, subsidies in the framework of the CAP are the most harmful for the global South (see chapter 2.1). They are justified by the EU’s registration during the Uruguay round for a permission of applying agricultural subsidies in exchange to penalty payments and are not negotiated within the post-Cotonou Agreement, but presented as immutable frame conditions by the EU.

Again, the EC’s neoliberal position gets cemented when they allege that “[protectionism] may provide short-term relief, but history shows that it never had lasting success and often led to disastrous outcomes” (European Commission, 2017, p. 12). Here the EC refers to specific historical experiences of the Soviet Union, Albania, China, Argentina and Venezuela, while keeping the lid on their own protectionist history and present. The history of the widely applied protectionism of European countries has been under great scrutiny in Ha-Joon Chang’s book ‘Kicking Away the Ladder’ (2002). Even though the historical evidence that European countries as well as the USA became economically so strong via protectionism before adopting “free” trade policies is broadly researched and available, it remains widely ignored by mainstream economists. In his book, which he describes as a “counter-evidence to the orthodox view of capitalism’s history” (p. 2), Ha-Joon Chang (2005) reveals that nearly all countries which are economically successful in the current global system have protected and promoted their infant industries in order to industrialise (p. 10; 126). This is especially astonishing because those states, e.g. Great Britain and the United States, claimed to have used *laissez-faire* policy from the very start, which Chang proves wrong via a detailed analysis of their historically applied policies (ibid., p. 10; 126). Chang builds on the infant industry argument of the economist Friedrich List (1841), which the latter developed as a response to

the finding that “free” trade only benefits both partners if they have a similar level of industrial development (in *ibid.*, pp. 4). As a corollary, the history of industrial development brought by “free” trade is a discursive and strategic lie, aiming at “kicking away the ladder”, so that other states do not imitate the success model (Chang, 2005, p. 2; 4). A similar level of industrial development is obviously not the case with the EU and the ACP countries, so that “free” trade policies will not benefit both trading partners according to historical experience – a hypothesis which stands in sharp contrast to liberal allegations that trade would be a win-win for all. Critics to “free” trade further argue that “free” trade, through its securing of a post-colonial division of labour, is an impediment to the industrialisation of most of the global South who is “specialised” in the production of agricultural goods and thus demand a temporary protection of infant industries (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 123).

Looking at hunger from protectionist lenses, one can conclude that hunger is politically produced. Article 3 of the post-Cotonou agreement acknowledges the importance of tackling the structural causes of food insecurity to fight poverty and inequality – but fails to recognize the CAP with its internal agricultural subsidies as one of them (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 22). Another argument against “free” trade derives from a food sovereignty perspective: Self-sufficiency in food can be considered a question of national security and thus calls for a protection of the food producing agricultural sector (O’Brien and Williams, 2020, p. 124). The danger of an import dependence of such essential goods like food becomes ever more evident in the current covid19 crisis, where trade was partially blocked to prevent the virus to spread further.

Finally, like Gibb (see chapter 4.1.1), Chang (2005) argues for a radical change in the WTO rules allowing the countries of the global South to use tariffs, subsidies and other protectionists measures to promote infant industries so that they can get strong enough to survive on the world market later and move to higher value-added activities (p. 141).

## 4.2 Inequality as a Root Cause of Politico-Economic Migration

First and foremost, this chapter manifests my understanding of migration, which derives most importantly from diverse personal contacts including grown friendships with people who left their countries to come to Europe out of diverse reasons including politico-economic reasons as well as my participation in the transnational network *afrique-europe-interact* consisting of people with and without migration background in both Europe and West Africa. This understanding led my choice of relevant literature on migration. Secondly, inequality is discussed as a structural root cause of migration, which should be tackled.

Inspired by Behr (2013), I comprehend migration and flight as the result of both structural violence and self-determination (p. 102). Before addressing the structural character, let us underline first what should be evident, but in political debates often is not, and besides what is also especially important from a post-colonial perspective: Migrants have agency. Although profoundly shaped by structural conditions, decisions to migrate are very individual at the same time and a lot more complex than what the neo-classical idea of the homo oeconomicus suggests: maximising individual profits (see Castles, 2004, pp. 208). Instead, social factors play a big role, e.g. families of migrants either financially enable the migration of one family member, benefit from remittances or both (ibid.). In 2017, remittances from the African diaspora to the mother continent were approximately double the amount of official development aid and also higher than the accumulated amount of foreign direct investment (Lopez, 2019, p. 23). It also has to be emphasized that remittances are very effective in reducing poverty because the families receive these payments directly and therewith can afford education or credits (ibid.). In addition, the term “culture of emigration“ (Castles, 2004, p. 210) highlights that migration also has a cultural value in certain contexts. Moreover, people might want to get more education, gather experience, realize a specific lifestyle or join those family members already living in the diaspora (Lenz and Maheswaran, 2019, p. 14). The thesis of the ‘autonomy of migration‘ (Bojadžijev in Behr 2013, p. 57) underlines that without questioning that there are structural economic reasons for migration, migrants have individual stories and migration is also a personal and autonomous decision. Moreover, women who migrate are not only often victims of sexualised violence but are also the bread-earners of their families and want to embrace their rights and liberties (Hess and Elle, 2019, p. 24). While supporting the thesis of the ‘autonomy of migration‘ and conceding agency to any person migrating and thereby seeking to enable a better life for themselves, their families and their communities (Castles, 2004, p. 209), we should nevertheless not lose sight of the negative structural causes evoking migration.

Fourteen out of fifteen West African (ECOWAS) countries are already off-track for reaching SDG1, the eradication of poverty, by 2030 (worldpoverty.org in McKeon, 2018, p. 889). A Senegalese peasant leader sees poverty and inequality at the root of migration in his region:

The accentuation of poverty and inequalities is key. People react differently. Many accept to fight poverty adopting a variety of strategies. Others, feeling that nothing will change the situation, decide to leave, comforted by images suggesting that things are better in Europe. (in McKeon, 2018, p. 879)

In his article 'Why migration policies fail', Stephen Castles (2004) also argues that inequality between the global North and the global South builds the core of root causes of migration. He emphasizes the relevance of the interrelations between countries of origin and destiny:

Migratory processes are determined and influenced by a broad range of conditions in sending and receiving countries, and in the relationships between them. A full understanding of any migratory flow requires a detailed analysis of all the societies involved. (p. 207)

The "North-South divide", meaning the ever more growing disparities in income, living conditions, security and human rights "create considerable pressure to migrate in search of better living conditions and greater personal freedom and security" (pp. 210). This continuing process of rising inequalities is closely tied to our capitalist, neo-colonial globalization model. In other words, capitalism inevitably bears inequality (Smith in Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 36). As a result, many reasons to migrate are directly or indirectly the result of the capitalist imperative for growth: market openings, privatizations, investment promotions, land grabbing or access to resources (Bernau, 2016, p. 7). Therefore, it can be argued that politico-economic migration is also a result of political decisions taken on the rich side of the inequality coin.

The vast disparities of wealth and power in the emerging global order mean that not all citizens are equal and that some passports are better than others. [...] In this context, migration control is really about regulating North-South relationships and maintaining inequality. (Castles, 2004, p. 223)

Conversely, one could argue that freedom of movement for all would counteract inequality via its redistribution mechanism of remittances. While the European border regime hardly shows any moral scruples when trying to hinder people from entering the EU without a legal permission, thereby securing the wealthiest nations from poorer people who claim their piece of cake, migrants are breaking the boundaries of national citizenship and thereby strive to create transnational spaces of liberty and equality (Bernau 2016, p. 2).

The author Castles (2004) does neither imply that South and North would be geographical locations, nor that they are absolute categories: while the South has elite groups, social groups in the global North find them politically marginalised. Instead, he puts emphasis on the fact that international borders have the function to maintain inequality between the financially poorer and richer states (Zolberg in Castles 2010, p. 211). This inequality is not only an abstract number, it can be felt by people in the global South, e.g. when media show romanticised images of (rather rich) First World life-styles (p. 211) or via the big mansions and expensive lifestyles of the expat high-society, which I observed in several African capitals and who by the way are the other privileged side of the migration medal, even if most of the so-

called “expatriates” would rather not acknowledge this. O’Brien and Williams (2020) confirm my hypothesis that the rising disparities between poor and rich, in other words, the rising inequality itself contribute to migration movements:

The controversy over refugees is partly a consequence of rising inequality between states and rising inequality in affluent societies. [...] The existence of glaring disparities between rich and poor nations will continue to fuel a trade in people smuggling and illegal migration. (p. 382)

Albeit the fight against inequality is mentioned in the pre-amble of the post-Cotonou Agreement: “eradicating poverty, fighting discriminations and inequalities” (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 3), concrete measures to tackle inequality are conspicuously absent in the agreement text. There is still a long way to go to shift European efforts from migration control to “tackling the root causes of inequality” (CONCORD, 2017).

## 5. Conclusion: Fighting the Real Root Causes of Migration

This conclusion should in the best case not only come from myself, a white European academic – but first and foremost from those who can speak on why they migrated: migrants themselves. Consequently, I want to pledge for any international or national forum on migration to listen especially to the voices of those concerned. This is the sine qua non or precondition for defining structural root causes of migration and equally for formulating responses to it. Beyond, we also need to listen to those people who are negatively affected by the existing EPAs or threatened to be affected by the upcoming post-Cotonou Agreement. To illustrate the point, the ROPPA proposes the promotion of young people’s employment in the context of small-scale family farming (McKeon, 2018, p. 882), which is very different from offered mainstream neoliberal “development” putative responses to the root causes of migration. This is by the way a typical problem of the “development” apparatus in general, which believes in and follows so-called experts who are assumed to know better than the concerned people themselves (Esteva in Ziai, 2012, 167). The marginalised voices of peasants, fishers, herders, housewives and refugees need to be consulted more and above all taken into consideration by powerful actors like the EU, the WTO and to a lesser extent the OACPS. Moreover, collaboration between a critical civil society and critical scholar-activists from the ACP as well as from the EU context is needed to reinforce the voices of the marginalised and to create strategies to collaboratively act as a counterhegemonic force in order to be able to shape economic policies according to the needs of those suffering most from inequality and

poverty. Binding provisions for civil society involvement as demanded by the NGO network Concord could guarantee this (in Pichon, 2019, p. 11).

Instead of instrumentalising the “root causes of migration” for the justification of “free” trade agreements, migration politics, too, should be negotiated under a strong counselling of the civil society and in suitable fora. Besides, the ACP group (ibid., p. 8). emphasizes the need to avoid that “development” finance gets used for border control, which is already widely the case (see Jakob, 2019, pp. 28) and that returns to the country of origin should be on a voluntary basis only (in Pichon, 2019, p. 8). Beyond that, freedom of movement for all is a strong demand by civil society groups like the transnational network *afrique-europe-interact*. Taking the poverty reducing aspect of migration into account, migration also combats inequality and thus finally combats its own root causes. Regular, circular migration could thus be a good opportunity to tackle inequality and thereby reduce the necessity for underprivileged and often very dangerous politico-economic migration.

The resistance against the EPAs of the past years needs to continue and to grow stronger with joint forces between the global South and North in order to dissuade the ACP governments from signing and ratifying post-Cotonou, but also to hold the EU responsible for the impacts of their “free” trade policies in both the frameworks of the WTO and bilateral trade agreements so that they stop defending tremendously exploitative neoliberal policies which create such a huge inequality that people risk their lives in search of a better life for themselves and their families.

The African Trade Network (2018) calls upon the ACP countries to orient themselves towards an “inclusive, equitable and gender-sensitive transformation of their economies, driven by their own self-determined national and regional imperatives“. The demand for self-determination instead of “development” is also a classical demand of post-development scholars (Ziai, 2001, pp. 11). This demand is also a response to the locking of Africa into an intensified neo-colonial relationship with the EU through the EPAs (ATN in Kokutse, 2008). The OACPS shows a will in overcoming these kinds of neo-colonial relations by negotiating to add “sovereign equality” as a principle to the preamble of the post-Cotonou Agreement in this late negotiation phase (OACPS-EU, 2020, p. 3). For self-determination to happen for the ACP countries and peoples, the right economic frame conditions need to be at place. Concretely, the ATN demands the protection of ACP producers and domestic as well as regional markets, special treatment also for the so-called developing countries instead of reciprocity in trade relations and last but not least space to formulate and pursue self-determined development strategies instead of imposed trade and investment liberalisations (African Trade Network, 2018). Representing West African family farmers, ROPPA joins the call for the protection of



farmers in West Africa from competition with foreign trading partners which is deemed unfair (in McKeon, 2018, p. 875).

To give self-determination some provisional, more concrete content: A broad coalition of Senegalese social movements, who jointly fought against the EPAs, consisting of peasants' and women's organisations as well as NGOs proposed food sovereignty as an alternative to the EPAs (Ndaw in Dembélé, 2007, p. 147). Food sovereignty is equally one of the demands by the coalition of Malian civil society partners against the EPAs (Traoré, 2008). Self-sufficiency in food production on the national level already had worked out in West Africa before, when Thomas Sankara made Burkina Faso independent of any food imports within the four years of his presidency (1983-87) (Sankara in van Grasdorff, et al., 2016, p. 6).

From my European standpoint, I deem it especially important to hold the EU accountable. This powerful actor should not abuse but share its power. Protecting its already more industrialised agricultural sector with internal subsidies, well knowing that this produces immense costs on the ACP side, is nothing but irresponsible and solely oriented to national and regional interests while veiling them with a "developmental" rhetoric. A fair trading system would take the unequal conditions of the trading partners into account. It needs the protection of economically weaker trading partners, not the opposite as currently happening with the EU agrarian subsidies.

Unfortunately, the ACP countries have not succeeded to negotiate a common agreement collectively, which would have uplifted their negotiating power (Pichon, 2019, p. 3). The African Union (AU) had shown ambitions to negotiate post-Cotonou for the AU as a whole (in *ibid.*, p. 10) instead of maintaining the post-colonial artificial entity of the ACP states or now OACPS, which would have strengthened the power positions of the African countries. Both the cause and the reinforcing effect of this failure are the asymmetric power positions in the negotiating process, where the EU as the main donor pulls the strings (Pichon, 2019, p. 10). I firmly agree with Pichon (2019) that this structural inequality must be countered, which he justifies with SDG17, global partnership (p. 10).

In the end, a good life for all so that nobody is forced to flee because of poverty and inequality is not possible as long as the global North sustains its imperial mode of living, which includes exploitative trade relations, such as the EU agrarian subsidies or the post-Cotonou Agreement (see Brand and Wissen, 2017, p. 12).

In conclusion, boosting inequality, the post-Cotonou Agreement, especially with its part on so-called free trade, can reasonably be considered an exacerbating factor of the root causes of migration. However, this currently negotiated "free" trade agreement is only aggravating existing highly asymmetric power relations in trade which are shaped by the

global trading system spearheaded by the institution of the WTO. Thus, to really touch upon the deep-rooted causes of inequality and the ensuing politico-economic migration, these trading rules would need to be radically transformed to the benefits of economically weaker states.

Last but not least, the trade relations in goods are only one part of the post-Cotonou Agreement which intensify existing inequalities and thus provoke migration. Other aspects such as the WTO plus issues investments, services, public procurement and competition law (Banse, 2016, p. 112) need further scrutiny in regards to their impact on inequality, if the post-Cotonou Agreement is to be analysed in its entirety as aggravating or even creating new root causes of migration.

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