THE DAMAGE (BEING) DONE

THE CASE FOR CLIMATE REPARATIONS FROM GERMANY TO CAMEROON

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INDEX

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ABSTRACT

The **exploitative practices of Germany's colonial period** have had a devastating impact on Cameroon. The most significant of these practices include massive deforestation, the displacement of traditional crops, the erection of vast monoculture plantations and accompanying social problems such as poverty and social tensions.

The impacts from exploitation have led to an economic system that continues to rely on export crops, leading to further destruction of tropical forests and high climate vulnerability. This vulnerability is heterogeneous across the country, with coastal regions facing rising sea levels and the intensification of extreme weather phenomena while the Sahelian regions facing drought and desertification. In addition, socio-economic inequalities, inherited from the colonial period, persist in Cameroon and exacerbate the vulnerability of populations to climate change.

The country's ability to adapt to climate change is hampered by a number of factors, notably the lack of resilient infrastructure and the weakness of early warning systems. Both of these factors have their roots in a key issue: insufficient financial resources.

In conclusion, Cameroon is one of the countries bearing the brunt of the damage caused by global warming while contributing very little to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Conversely, Germany has contributed a considerable amount to the climate catastrophe. Climate reparations from Germany to Cameroon are a way to right this wrong and improve Cameroon's situation. At a minimum, they consist of an apology, a form of material compensation and a guarantee not to repeat the offence, the latter requiring a rapid decarbonisation and systemic transformation of the economy.

Considering material compensation, we have calculated that Germany would have to pay roughly €38 billion to Cameroon. This must not be confused with development aid, which usually perpetuates subornation and colonial rule. Reparations instead are a way of liberation, they cannot undo the damage done, but can help mitigate consequences, prevent harm for future generations and create a fairer world.

With regards to concrete pathways for financial reparations, we propose a mosaic of action on the multilateral and bilateral stage. The most advanced options on the multilateral stage are the demand to cancel the debt of the Global South and the loss and damage fund that is part of the international climate negotiations, the latter of which is severely underfunded. Bilateral options are needed when multilateral negotiations threaten to go nowhere, and special relationships such as those of a colonizer and the colonized should be taken into account.

„WITHOUT COLONIES NO RAW MATERIALS; WITHOUT RAW MATERIALS NO WORK; COLONIES COMING OUT“

Advertisement by the German Colonial Society for the recovery of former colonies in Africa

Although the German colonial period may seem relatively short (1884–1916), it was made official on 12 July 1884 with the signing of a historic document: the Germo-Duala treaty by the indigenous Bell and Akwa sovereigns. This pact sealed the fate of the ‘country called Cameroon’[1], ceding not only the territory but also the rights of sovereignty to the powerful Woermann shipping and trading company.[2] The signing of the Germano-Duala treaty was important because it showed that Cameroon was a legal entity protected by Germany. Henceforth masters of Cameroon, the Germans hastened to circumscribe their area of sovereignty, i.e. the Cameroonian territorial space, the borders of which were clearly defined around 1895. The next day, the rights granted to Woermann came under the jurisdiction of the Reich and Kaiser Wilhelm I as a German protectorate (Schutzgebiet). Before the end of the 1st World War, France and Great Britain, who were already coveting the German colonies, took over Cameroon by setting up a joint administration.

Two days later, on the 14th of July, a major military ceremony officially marked the taking of possession of the territory. Gustav Nachtigal, the Imperial Commissioner, conducted the event with military rigour, surrounded by a detachment of twenty sailors, while drums and fifes echoed to the rhythm of the German flags flying over Bell-Town, Akwa-Town and Dido-Town. This show of force symbolised much more than a simple territorial acquisition: it embodied Germany’s determination to impose its order on a territory considered strategic, as much for its natural resources as for its geopolitical position.

It was against this backdrop that, in 1905, King Rudolf Manga Bell, heir to the throne of Douala, emerged as an emblematic figure of resistance. Confronted with forced expropriations and the violation of rights, he became the defender of his people. Rudolf Manga Bell’s relentless fight against colonial injustice was not tolerated by the German administration. Charged with high treason for having attempted to mobilise international support against expropriation, he was executed on 8 August 1914, marking the tragic end of one of the most significant resistances to German colonial rule in Cameroon.

This tragic episode is a striking illustration of the systemic brutality of German colonial rule in Cameroon. Violence was not limited to political repression, but extended to the entire system of economic and environmental exploitation established by the colonial authorities. This exploitation was carried out with total disregard for the local populations and their traditional ways of life.[3] As Paul Ahidjo explains, ‘the German imperial government decided

[1] The ethnonym “Cameroon” was initially associated with the Doualas, a group located on the estuary of the Wouri River in the 19th century. With the expansion of German control, the name gradually came to designate the entire colony. Derived from the Portuguese ‘Rio dos Camarões’ (river of prawns), attributed in the 16th century to the abundance of prawns in the Wouri, the term was anglicised to “Cameroon”, then Germanised to “Kamerun”, and adopted by the French as “Cameroun”.

[2] The Woermann Shipping and Trading Company, founded in the 19th century by Adolph Woermann in Hamburg, was one of the leading German companies engaged in maritime and colonial trade in West Africa. It established trading posts and port infrastructures from 1868 onwards.

[3] Nguiffo, S., Kenfack, P. E., & Mballa, N. (2009). Historical and contemporary land laws and their impact on the land rights of indigenous peoples in Cameroon (No. 2), Forest Peoples Programme, pp. 25.

to turn Cameroon into a commercial and plantation colony.'[4] This economic orientation transformed Cameroon into a major source of raw materials for German industry, causing considerable social and environmental upheaval.[5]

The impact of this colonial exploitation on Cameroon's environment was particularly devastating. Massive deforestation and soil degradation, resulting from intensive and unsustainable agricultural practices, irreversibly altered local ecosystems.[6] These ecological transformations have probably significantly reduced the resilience of ecosystems to climate change, creating an environmental vulnerability that persists to this day.

Today, Cameroon is disproportionately exposed to the effects of climate change, despite the fact that its historical contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is minimal.[7] By contrast, Germany, as a country historically responsible for colonial exploitation and as a major emitter of greenhouse gases, has the resources and infrastructure to address these climate challenges. This disparity raises the crucial question of 'climate debt' and Germany's responsibility for repairing the ecological damage caused. The concept of 'climate debt' underlines the moral obligation of industrialised countries, which have historically been responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and environmental destruction, to support vulnerable countries such as Cameroon.[8] This support should take many forms, including substantial financial and technical initiatives, enabling Cameroon to strengthen its resilience in the face of climate crises and to implement effective adaptation strategies.

This study aims to explore the (historical) dimensions of this climate debt, linking it both to Germany's colonial atrocities in Cameroon and to its historic and current GHG emissions impacting Cameroon.

The study has three main focus areas. Firstly, we will briefly present the impact of German colonial rule on Cameroon's environment and society. Secondly, we describe how these impacts have led to a situation of particular climate vulnerability for Cameroon. Thirdly we will explore the topic of climate reparations in general and in the specific case of Cameroon-Germany.

4 Ahidjo, P. (2018). German administration and management of natural resources in Kamerun (1884–1916). Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities, 4(6), p. 5.

5 Ibid. p. 5.

6 Kouna Eloundou, C. (2012). Forest decentralisation and local governance of forests in Cameroon: The case of communal and community forests in the East region, pp. 35–39. University of Maine.

7 Climate change directly impacts more than 70% of Cameroon's population, whose livelihoods depend directly on agriculture, even though Cameroon has reduced its per capita CO_2 emissions from 9.32 tonnes in 1998 to 4.89 tonnes in 2018. World Bank. (2022). Cameroon national climate and development report 2022, p. 21.

8 Warlenius, R., Pierce, G., & Ramasar, V. (2015). Reversing the arrow of arrears: The concept of "ecological debt" and its value for environmental justice. Global Environmental Change, 30, p. 21–30.

I. Exploitation during German colonial rule and its impact on Cameroon's climate vulnerability

Under German colonization, Cameroon was subjected to systematic and intensive exploitation of its natural resources, orchestrated by the colonial authorities with the aim of maximizing the profits of the colonial enterprise. Cameroon, with its 787,840 km² surface area, was particularly rich in natural resources, from rubber to precious minerals, attracting the attention of German investors.[9] To facilitate exploitation, the colonial authorities quickly put in place a legal and administrative framework to legitimize their control over the land and resources. The Imperial Decree of 15 June 1896, for example, transformed 'terres vacantes et sans maitres' into Crown property, thereby allowing the expropriation of land belonging to local communities and enabling the large-scale exploitation of natural resources.[10] Cameroon's national archives, particularly those in Yaounde and Buea, contain documents that reveal the scale of the extraction activities.[11] These show that the German colonial administration implemented economic policies that favoured the extraction of Cameroon's natural resources, such as agricultural produce and forest resources, in order to strengthen its economy rather than focusing on improving infrastructure or supporting local communities.

[9] Maderspacher, A. (2009). The National Archives of Cameroon in Yaoundé and Buea. History in Africa, 36, p. 453–460. https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2010.0009

[10] Nguiffo, S., Kenfack, P. E., & Mballa, N. (2019). Land dynamics, ethnocracy, and the challenge of ethnocultural integration in Cameroon. Volume 43(1), p. 211–231. https://doi.org/10.7202/1060877ar

[11] Maderspacher, A. (2009). The National Archives of Cameroon in Yaoundé and Buea. History in Africa, 36, p. 453–460. https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2010.0009

I.1. FORESTRY

German colonization led to massive deforestation in Cameroon, radically transforming the forest landscape. German forestry companies such as the Südkamerun Gesellschaft and Nord-West Kamerun Gesellschaft acquired vast forest concessions, covering 7 million and 4.5 million hectares respectively.[12] The German authorities also introduced rudimentary forest management methods, aimed at maximizing productivity but largely neglecting the sustainability of resources. African hardwoods such as ebony, iroko and sapelli were exploited intensively to meet the growing demand for wood on the European market.

A WWF study shows that Cameroon lost around 3.3 million hectares of forest cover between 1900 and 1960.[13] This loss of forest cover has not only increased carbon emissions, but has also reduced the capacity of forests to absorb carbon dioxide, thereby contributing to climate change with lasting effects on the global climate.[14] Finally, German logging practices, which focused on extracting the most valuable species, have disrupted the natural regeneration cycles of forests.

As D. Wilkie and N. Laporte note, the reduction in forest cover has reduced the capacity of forests to regulate water flows, exacerbating the risks of landslides and flooding. These environmental disruptions are making the country more sensitive to the effects of climate change, exacerbating the threats to local communities already weakened by these changes.[15]

I.2. AGRICULTURE

With regards to agriculture, colonial policies led to the creation of vast plantations which gradually replaced traditional food crops, thereby disrupting the country's agrarian structure.[16] According to Marc Michel, the introduction of cash crops such as tobacco, cocoa, bananas and above all oil palms generated substantial revenue for the colony, with plantations covering a total area of 115,147 hectares in 1913, including 28,225 hectares under cultivation and 90,000 hectares under concession on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. [17] Cocoa production, in particular, soared from 88 tonnes in 1905 to 4,696 tonnes in 1913.[18]

The introduction of commercial monocultures such as cocoa, tobacco and palm oil had devastating effects on Cameroon's soils. The rapid expansion of plantations, particularly in the western highlands, has led to increased soil erosion and loss of biodiversity. In addition, unsustainable agricultural practices, such as land burning and intensive clearing, have exacerbated these problems.[19] Paul Tchawa shows that these monocultures have disrupted ecological balances by replacing traditional food crops, leading to a reduction in biological diversity and accelerated soil degradation. This soil erosion and loss of biodiversity reflect a profound and lasting disruption of local ecosystems.[20]

Monocultures have altered the growth regimes of local plants and altered soil structure, making it difficult to restore native forests and compromising the resilience of forest ecosystems.[21] This difficulty in restoring ecosystems demonstrates the extent to which damages caused by colonial exploitation are still affecting Cameroon.

[12] Uret-Canale, J. (n.d.). Black West and Central Africa: The colonial period (1900–1945), Tomme 2, p. 531.

[13] It is important to note that this time span exceeds the period of German colonization, which ended in 1916. This reference was chosen because there is no precise statistical data that specifically assesses the loss of forest cover during the German colonial period in Cameroon alone. Thus, the figures provided also include the impacts of the post-colonial periods and provide an overview of the consequences of logging in the country.

[14] Dkamela, G. P. (2014). Analysis of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Cameroon: Final report. WWF Cameroon.

[15] Molua, L. (2006). The economics of tropical agroforestry systems: The case of agroforestry farms in Cameroon. Forest Policy and Economics, 7(2), p. 199–211.

[16] Nguiffo, S., Kenfack, P. E., & Mballa, N. (2019). Land dynamics, ethnocracy, and the challenge of ethnocultural integration in Cameroon. Volume 43(1), p. 211–231. https://doi.org/10.7202/1060877ar

[17] Michel, M. (1970). The German plantations of Mount Cameroon (1885–1914). Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire, 207, p. 183–213.

[18] Michel, M. (1970). The German plantations of Mount Cameroon (1885–1914). Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire, 207, p. 183–213.

[19] Jorin, S. (1989). The western highlands and basins of Cameroon (Doctoral dissertation, University of Bordeaux III), p. 1190.

[20] Tchawa, P. (2012). Cameroon: "Little Africa"? Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer, 65(259), p. 319–338. https://doi.org/10.4000/com.6640

[21] Temgoua, A. (2014). Cameroon at the time of Germany: 1884–1916 (French edition). Editions L'Harmattan.

I.3. SOCIAL IMPACT

In rural areas, the decline in non-timber forest resources, such as medicinal plants, fruits and nuts, has limited income opportunities for local communities, exacerbating poverty. The reduced access to natural resources has led to increased economic inequalities and widening social disparities in the affected regions.[22] Poverty and growing social inequalities are direct consequences of this intensive exploitation, which continues to affect local communities. At the same time, logging became a fundamental pillar of the German colonial economy in Cameroon. For example, Phil René Oyono's study reveals the economic importance of this activity: in 1913, log exports to Europe brought in almost 950,000 Deutschmarks, testifying to the profitability of logging for the German colonial administration.[23] Plantations also played a central role in the German colonial economy, transforming Cameroon's agricultural landscape into an export-oriented model.

Forestry companies often used local labour, under extremely difficult working conditions, to intensify timber production.[24] In the eastern forest region, local people were forced to collect wild rubber for the Sudkamerun Gesellschaft.[25] Faced with labour shortages, some plantations, such as Moliwe Pflanzung, had to import forced labourers to maintain their production levels.[26]

In addition to the environmental impacts, deforestation has also exacerbated social tensions, particularly over access to natural resources. For example, Richard Mbatu points out that local communities living in the Korup National Park region, who depended on forests for their livelihoods, have seen their livelihoods severely affected by the degradation of forest ecosystems, leading to inter-community conflicts over subsistence. The loss of agricultural land and forest resources has intensified social tensions and provoked conflicts between local populations and the authorities.[27] These conflicts have often led to forced displacement and a deterioration in the living conditions of rural communities, increasing social inequalities.[28]

[22] Yufanyi Movuh, C. (2012). The colonial heritage and post-colonial influence, entanglements, and implications of the concept of community forestry by the example of Cameroon. Journal of Environmental Management, 95(11). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2011.05.004

[23] Oyono, P. R. (2006). Local actors, representation, and the politics of eco-power in post-1994 rural Cameroon. Canadian Journal of Development Studies, 27(2), p. 163–185.

[24] Michel, M. (1970). The Almonds Farm in Cameroon (1885–1914). Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 57(207), p. 183–213.

[25] Joseph, R. (1986). Cameroon nationalist movement. Kartala, p.414.

[26] Lobhe Bilebel, N. (2020). The masks of prehistory in West Africa. History and Archaeology, 6, p. 71.

[27] Mbatu, R. (2016). Deforestation in the Korup National Park area, Cameroon: Addressing the disconnect between policy and implementation. International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology, 23(1), p. 77–90.

[28] Rudin, H. (1968). Germans in the Cameroons 1884–1914: A case study in modern imperialism. Greenwood Press.

II. Cameroon's climate vulnerability and adaptation challenges

Cameroon's current climate vulnerability is the result of a complex interaction between its colonial past, its socio-economic structures and its environmental challenges. The legacy of the German colonial era, combined with limited adaptive capacity, has significantly shaped the country's resilience to climate change.

The exploitation of natural resources, the disruption of traditional land use patterns and the introduction of monoculture farming systems, all a legacy of the colonial period, have also contributed to the country's vulnerability to climate change.

In addition, Cameroon's limited adaptive capacity, particularly among marginalized communities and vulnerable populations, has been a major factor in its climate vulnerability. Small-scale farmers, who make up a large part of the country's agricultural sector, have been disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change, including lower crop yields, water scarcity and increased food insecurity.[29] Indeed, some regions of Cameroon are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The Diamaré department in the Far North region, for example, has experienced severe water constraints and drought-related agricultural problems, resulting in reduced agricultural production and food insecurity. The north-west region of Cameroon has also been identified as highly vulnerable, with small-scale farmers facing significant challenges in building their resilience to climate change.[30]

29 Mbuli, C., Fonjong, L. et Fletcher, A. (2021). Changement climatique et vulnérabilité des petits agriculteurs à l'insécurité alimentaire au Cameroun. Sustainability, 13(3), p. 1523. https://doi.

30 Awazi, N., Temgoua, L., & Shidiki, A. (2022). Examining farmers' resilience to climate change and policy ramifications in North-West Cameroon. Journal of Environmental Management, 300, p. 113-748. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2021.113748

II.1 CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

Cameroon faces a myriad of challenges in coping with the adverse effects of climate change, many of which can be traced back to its colonial history.[31] During the German colonial period, the natural resource management practices and economic structures put in place formed the foundation of an economic system that continues to be characterised by a dependence on export crops and persistent socio-economic inequalities, which both exacerbate the effects of climate change.[32]

One of the main factors of vulnerability relates to the **management of Cameroon's dense tropical forests** (Congo Basin), which play a key role in mitigating and adapting to climate change.[33] These forests cover around 22.5 million hectares, or almost 47% of the national territory.[34] During the German colonial era, the forests of the Congo Basin received little attention in national planning and policies.[35] Today, Cameroon's forests are subject to strong anthropogenic and natural pressures, which contribute to the release of CO_2.[36] According to FAO data, between 2005 and 2010 there was a reduction of around 200,000 hectares per year, or around 1% of forest cover. On average, Cameroon lost 220,000 hectares per year between 1990 and 2010. Overall, between 1990 and 2010, Cameroon's forest area shrank by 18.1%, or around 4,400,000 hectares.[37] This deforestation is mainly due to the conversion of forests to agriculture (which accounts for 80% of the loss of forest cover), followed by fuelwood harvesting and illegal logging. The country's remaining intact primary forests are increasingly being accessed by logging activities. Cameroon has less than 20% of forests that are not included in forest zones and that have not yet been felled.

Agricultural area is expanding because Cameroon's economy remains largely dependent on export crops such as coffee, cocoa and cotton, inherited from the colonial period. These crops are highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly variations in temperature and rainfall.[38] In 2021, the agricultural sector employed nearly 60% of the working population and remained the predominant sector of the economy in terms of its contribution to GDP (23%).[39] Economic dependence on export crops weakens the country's resilience to climate shocks. For example, cocoa production, which accounts for around 15% of agricultural exports, fell by 10% between 2015 and 2019 due to unfavourable weather conditions.[40]

In addition, **socio-economic inequalities**, inherited from the colonial period, persist in Cameroon and exacerbate the vulnerability of populations to climate change. In 2020, almost 55% of the population was living below the poverty line, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas.[41] The most vulnerable populations, in particular women, children and the elderly, are most affected by the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, floods and reduced agricultural productivity. Women, who make up almost 55.8% of the agricultural workforce in Cameroon, are particularly vulnerable to climate shocks.[42]

[31] Awazi, N., Temgoua, L., & Shidiki, A. (2022). Examining farmers' resilience to climate change and policy ramifications in North-West Cameroon. Journal of Environmental Management, 300, p. 113-748. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2021.113748

[32] Wächter, H. J. (2008). Naturschutz in den deutschen Kolonien in Afrika (1884–1918), 112 pp. This book looks at the management of natural resources in the German colonies, including Cameroon, and discusses the environmental and social consequences of these practices.

[33] MINEPDD. (2015). Precipitation and temperature in western Cameroon: Analysis of evolution from 1950 to 2015 and projections to 2090, p. 144.

[34] Sighomnou, D. (2004). Analysis and redefinition of Cameroon's climate and hydrological policies: Evolutionary prospects for water resources (PhD dissertation, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon), p. 209.

[35] Megevand, C. (2013). Deforestation dynamics in the Congo Basin: Balancing economic growth and forest protection. World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-9827-2

[36] Kengoum, F., & Tiani, A. M. (2013). Adaptation and mitigation policies in Cameroon: Pathways to synergies. Special Issue No. 96, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), p. 10.

[37] Nnah Ndobe, S., & Mantzel, K. (2014). Deforestation, REDD, and the Takamanda National Park in Cameroon: A case study. Forest Peoples Programme, May, p. 5.

[38] Dkamela, G. (2014). The REDD+ context, drivers, actors, and institutions in Cameroon. Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), p. 86.

[39] World Bank. (2021). Agriculture, value added (% of GDP) - Cameroon. OECD Data. https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=CM

[40] Fabre, T., et al. (2022). Traceability, transparency, and sustainability in Cameroon's cacao industry, p. 74.

[41] World Food Programme (WFP). (2022). Cameroon National Strategic Plan (2022-2026), p.10. https://www.wfp.org/countries/cameroon

[42] Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2023). The situation of women in food systems, p. 264. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5060en

II.2 LIMITED CAPACITY TO ADAPT

Cameroon faces a profound climate vulnerability that is intrinsically linked to its limited adaptive capacity. The country's resilience to the harmful effects of climate change is hampered by a number of factors, notably the lack of resilient infrastructure and the weakness of early warning systems. Both of these factors have their roots in a key issue: insufficient financial resources.

The lack of resilient infrastructure is a major obstacle to adaptation to climate change in Cameroon. Agricultural infrastructure, the mainstay of the rural economy, is particularly vulnerable to climate hazards. As Nyong Princely Awazi points out, irrigation systems, storage capacities and transport networks in rural areas are largely inadequate. This situation exacerbates the vulnerability of rural communities to extreme climatic events, such as droughts and floods, thereby compromising the stability of agricultural yields and food security. Chronic under-investment in these infrastructures increases farmers' dependence on climatic conditions, exposing them to increased volatility in agricultural production.[43]

At the same time, Cameroon suffers from a significant deficit in early warning systems, severely limiting its ability to anticipate and respond to climatic disasters. Although the National Climate Change Observatory is making remarkable efforts to improve climate monitoring, limited financial resources restrict its action. Current warning systems, where they exist, do not always provide sufficiently accurate, detailed and timely information to enable populations and decision-makers to take effective adaptation measures.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the financial needs to strengthen the country's climate resilience far exceed the funds available.[44] Cameroon, like many other developing countries, relies heavily on international aid to finance its adaptation initiatives. These funds, however, are often insufficient, irregular and perpetuate the neo-colonial notion that the Global South owes to the Global North. Internal budgetary constraints, combined with inefficient allocation of resources, limit the government's ability to invest in resilient infrastructure or develop effective early warning programmes. The lack of funding also undermines the implementation of long-term adaptation strategies, such as the introduction of drought-resistant crop varieties or the development of sustainable agricultural technologies. According to the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the funds allocated represent less than 1% of GDP, which is far below what is needed to strengthen the country's climate resilience.[45]

[43] Awazi, N. (2022). Agroforestry for climate change adaptation, resilience enhancement, and vulnerability attenuation in smallholder farming systems in Cameroon. Journal of Atmospheric Science Research, 5(1), p.25–33. https://doi.org/10.30564/jasr.v5i1.4303

[44] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2023). Climate finance. https://climatepromise.undp.org/fr/what-we-do/areas-of-work/financement-climatique

[45] MINEPDD. (2021). National-level contribution - Updated (CDN), p. 64.

II.3 PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE REGIONS

Cameroon's climatic vulnerability is heterogeneous across the country, with some areas particularly exposed. Coastal regions face specific risks linked to rising sea levels and the intensification of extreme weather phenomena. Sahelian regions, on the other hand, are facing increasing challenges in terms of drought and desertification.

Non-exhaustive list of some disasters and climatic shocks in Cameroon (2020-2023)

DATE
November 2023
REGION & LOCALITY
Far North; Blangoua in the Logone and Chari department.
TYPE OF DISASTER
Flooding following the overflowing of the Chari river and torrential rains
HUMAN COSTS
Nearly 10,000 people were affected and 23 households were displaced.
MATERIAL COSTS
19 schools, three health centres and several hectares of fields were flooded and destroyed.

DATE
October 2023
REGION & LOCALITY
Center; Yaounde
TYPE OF DISASTER
Collapse of a hillside following torrential rain
HUMAN COSTS
More than 30 dead
MATERIAL COSTS
Several properties damaged

DATE
October 2023
REGION & LOCALITY
Far North; Department of Mayo-Danay
TYPE OF DISASTER
Flooding in the Kataw district of Chad
HUMAN COSTS
Nearly 2,800 Chadian nationals have taken refuge in the Mourla site

DATE
July 2023
REGION & LOCALITY
Far North; Departments of Mayo-Danay and Logone et Chari.
TYPE OF DISASTER
Flooding following the rise in water levels in the Logone River following heavy rainfall on 1 and 2 July
MATERIAL COSTS
Material damage and destruction of a dozen rice fields in the village of Kounkouma

DATE
October 2022
REGION & LOCALITY
Far North; Departments of Mayo-Danay and Logone et Chari.
TYPE OF DISASTER
Rising water levels in the River Chari and its tributaries and flooding following heavy rainfall
HUMAN COSTS
More than 38,000 households (200,072 people) affected
MATERIAL COSTS
In the town of Kousseri, around ten districts have been totally or partially flooded.
More than 150 villages in the arrondissements of Zina, Logone Birni, Makary and Blangoua flooded, and several others threatened.
More than 18,200 houses and thousands of hectares of fields destroyed.
126 schools flooded, depriving 32,813 children (15,826 girls) of access to education, 27,400 hectares of fields destroyed, 5,886 animals dead, 294 water points flooded, 1,194 latrines swallowed up.

DATE

September 2022

REGION & LOCALITY

Far North

TYPE OF DISASTER

Departments of Mayo-Danay, Logone et Chari and Mayo-Tsanaga.

HUMAN COSTS

Rising water levels in the River Chari and its tributaries and flooding following heavy rainfall

MATERIAL COSTS

More than 1,330 people affected in six localities in the Mokolo district.
More than 15,330 households (88,537 people) affected in the three departments.
Breaching of dykes between Tékélé and Alvakay and in the village of Dibissa.
More than 9,410 shelters damaged or destroyed.
Around 3,019 animals dead or washed away.
90 water points and 535 latrines flooded.
126 school buildings flooded.
10,342 hectares of fields destroyed, representing 9.1% of the total area of cereals production.

DATE

August 2021

REGION & LOCALITY

Littoral; City of Douala

TYPE OF DISASTER

Flooding caused by heavy rain

HUMAN COSTS

At least two dead

MATERIAL COSTS

Several properties damaged

DATE

May 2021

REGION & LOCALITY

Far North; Departments of Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone et Chari

TYPE OF DISASTER

Torrential rainfall recorded on 28 April

HUMAN COSTS

12,111 internally displaced persons

DATE

November 2020

REGION & LOCALITY

Far North; Logone et Chari Department

TYPE OF DISASTER

Flooding following the heavy rainy season.

HUMAN COSTS

1,477 households, i.e. 11,521 people, displaced in the town of Kousseri due to flooding of the Logone river

MATERIAL COSTS

Deterioration of the Maroua-Kousseri road via Zina

DATE

October 2020

REGION & LOCALITY

Far North; Departments of Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone et Chari

TYPE OF DISASTER

Flooding following the heavy rainy season.

HUMAN COSTS

50 dead and 357 households displaced

MATERIAL COSTS

104 primary and secondary schools were ravaged, affecting more than 38,000 pupils.
Destruction of road infrastructure and 70 per cent of sorghum, bean and rice fields, as well as livestock.

DATE

August 2020

REGION & LOCALITY

Far North; Departments of Mayo-Danay

TYPE OF DISASTER

Flooding following heavy rainy season

HUMAN COSTS

813 families (5,553 people) severely affected

MATERIAL COSTS

Deterioration of rural roads

This information comes from the Autonomous Amortisation Fund of Cameroon

III. Climate reparations by Germany for Cameroon in practice

In the previous chapter we explored the colonial activities of Germany in Cameroon, leading to a situation that leaves Cameroon especially vulnerable to climate change with limited ability to adapt. Building on these insights, in the following chapter we now propose an approach to improve Cameroon's situation while attempting to right the wrongs of the past and present: climate reparations.

After a short introduction to climate reparations in general, we present an attempt to quantify the necessary financial reparations and discuss how reparations could look like in practice. As highlighted above, a holistic understanding of reparations includes the complete overhaul of the economic system; as this endeavour exceeds the capacities of this publication, the following sub-chapters omit the "guarantee of non-repetition" explained above.

III.1. WHAT ARE REPARATIONS?[46]

Climate reparations are strategies and measures that an entity, such as a state, supra-national structures or large companies, takes to redress past and present systemic injustices related to the climate crisis and to transform the (global) economy to ensure climate justice, well-being and equality for all people globally. Countries and communities that have been affected by colonialism, slavery and poverty have contributed the least to global emissions, yet they are bearing the brunt of the damage caused by global warming and have fewer resources to cope with its effects. Conversely, the countries, companies and communities that have contributed the most to the climate catastrophe and are therefore responsible for it have benefited from the use of fossil fuels for centuries and have thus incurred an immense climate debt.

Climate reparations aim to make amends for this injustice by addressing the root causes of the climate crisis and by repaying the climate debt. While it will not be possible to undo the damage done, reparations can mitigate consequences, prevent harm for future generations and create a fairer world.

Currently, the relations are inverted. Those who already suffered under centuries of colonialism now suffer under inflated financial debt. The Global South is in a so-called debt crisis[47] which is in stark contrast to the true allocation of injustice and debt. This can be linked to the way in which the global financial system was set up in the aftermath of colonization.[48] Nowadays, due to the extraction of resources and human labour, the terms of domination have shifted to a less obvious but nevertheless devastating modus of financial dominance. It is therefore crucial to not only question the financial debt of the Global South to the Global North, but also to highlight the historical, climatic and ecological debt of the North to the Global South. This debt it is qualitatively and quantitatively more significant than the owed financial debts.

Maxine Burkett proposed an initial definition of climate reparations, which includes three key elements:

1. an apology,
2. a monetary or other form of compensation that gives actual or symbolic weight to that apology, and, most importantly.
3. an undertaking by the perpetrator not to repeat the offense, also known as the “guarantee of non-repetition.”

All three elements are equally important and demonstrate that climate reparations include a form of cultural recognition in addition to a form of material compensation (which can be in financial form or through the exchange of other resources). The third key element, the “guarantee of non-repetition”, bears a transformative element. In the case of climate debt and the adjacent climate crisis, non-repetition amounts to nothing less than rapid decarbonisation and a systemic and structural transformation of the global economy. This means ending the ongoing (neo)colonial exploitation of people and planet and distributing power and resources more equitably.

Climate reparations aim to make amends for this injustice by addressing the root causes of the climate crisis and by repaying the climate debt.

46 The following explanations are largely taken from our last publication of Climate Reparations.

47 Rawnsley, J. (2022). Debt burden traps global south in a vicious circle, Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/f4b04f39-8b9d-463d-8e95-ebb0d1514e21

48 Arewa, O. (2023). Colonial hangover in global financial markets: Eurobonds, China, and African debt. In N. S. Sylla (Ed.), Imperialism and the political economy of Global South’s debt (Research in Political Economy, Vol. 38), pp. 55–85. Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0161-723020230000038003

III.2. REPARATIONS AS A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN GERMAN-CAMEROONIAN RELATIONS

From colonies to development aid

German colonial rule in Cameroon lasted until 1916, as French, Belgian and English forces conquered the land.It was through the Treaty of Versailles that Germany was forced to give up all of its colonies, as it had lost the war. Along with other territories, the fate of Cameroon was decided by the League of Nations which transferred the land not to the people that lived there, but to other colonial powers: France and Britain.

The two vanquishers of the war perpetuated colonial rule, building on the infrastructure Germany had established which was devoted to extracting resources. While German state efforts to influence Cameroon were hindered, efforts to exert power and extract resources out of Cameroon partly shifted from public to private and became solely the subject of German companies.[49] In 1924, German plantation owners re turned to Cameroon as investors, buying up the very same land that they exploited over a decade before. The colonial continuities persisted until the early days of the German Federal Republic. Former managers of the colonial plantations were employed by the German government as “experts” with regard to the African Continent for the purpose of developmental “aid”.[50]

As of 2024, the Federal Republic of Germany has not apologized for the colonial crimes committed with regards to Cameroon, while becoming one of the largest providers of foreign aid. The question thus arises if this aid is a contribution to climate justice and appropriate compensation for past wrongs. And if not – how must climate reparations differ from development aid?

The flaws of development aid

The amount of foreign aid spent in Cameroon can seem large, as Germany is among the top three bilateral sponsors.[51] As of 2024, Germany is involved in 50 projects amounting to an overall budget of approximately €295 mil.[52] But this sum amounts to little in comparison to the damages done, as our calculations show (see below), €38 billion need to be transferred from Germany to Cameroon to account for the social cost of carbon that German emissions have created in Cameroon. The development aid currently employed bilaterally from Germany towards Cameroon amounts to 1% of the funding that would be necessary.

49 German economic presence not only lasted longer than its colonial rule, it also preceded the formation of the colony. The Woermann trading company conducted business in Douala since 1868. The Hamburger Trading Company was a proponent of German colonial politics and pushed for the establishment of the colony in 1884. This goes to show how capital interests were at the forefront of the German colonial project, in its wake as well as in its aftermath.
Source: http://deutschland-postkolonial.de/portfolio/woermann/.

50 Authaler, C. (2018). Deutsche Plantagen in Britisch-Kamerun, Böhlau Verlag. p.75, 234.

51 Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ). (2024). Kamerun: Country data. https://www.bmz.de/de/laender/kamerun

52 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). (2024). Projektdaten: Cameroon. https://www.giz.de/projektdaten/region/3/countries/CM

While the amount of transferred money for development aid is insufficient to account for the social cost of carbon of German emissions, the principle of developmental aid itself is flawed and should not to be confused with climate reparations.

- → Firstly, the allocation of development aid is decided on by the donor, in this case Germany, who chooses the amount and target of the aid given. The people living in Cameroon do not get a say in what is worthy of support and what not, resulting in a democracy gap.
- → Secondly, development aid is often used as a tool to push for privatization and proletarisation, stripping societies of common goods and installing a privatized society in which people have to sell more of their workforce to access goods is a very narrow understanding of development, unfit to benefit the many.
- → Thirdly, if aid comes in form of a loan, it adds to the crushing pressure of debt, which subsequently narrows the scope of action of the state. The state is then forced to service debt instead of investing in infrastructure, social security or climate related issues.[53]
- → Fourthly, development aid can defend donor interest in the realm of geopolitics, e.g. to stabilize undemocratic regimes[54] or limit migration.[55]
- → Finally, looking at the issue of developmental aid through a cultural lens, the Cameroonian linguist Cilas Kemedijio[56] attests the downfall of the Cameroonian state as former agent of an anti-imperial struggle, which is exemplified through the rise of NGOs financed by development aid. The state has lost its legitimacy and capacity to act in the interest of its constituency and is replaced by the pseudo benevolent institutions of the former imperial power.

This analysis of the downsides of development aid is a helpful tool to conceptualize climate reparations. While development aid can result in domination in new forms, reparations need to be a way of liberation. The current mechanisms of development aid limit democratic powers, act in donor interest, and perpetuate subordination and colonial rule. Reparations on the other hand, are not a form benevolence; they are just and necessary. They stem from the observation that Germany has done harm to Cameroon, and that it is obliged to make up for them in order to achieve climate justice. The reparations must to be multifaceted; as described below, financial reparations are merely one aspect in reparations: other aspects such as the promise to not repeat the harm done, an apology and other forms of transnational justice are also necessary.

53 Rawnsley, J. (2022). Debt burden traps global south in a vicious circle, Financial Times. https://www.ft.com/content/f4b04f39-8b9d-463d-8e95-ebb0d1514e21

54 For example, to stabilize regions to ensure a continuation of resource extraction.

55 This effort is not necessarily effective in its own account and is in the interest of the donor countries inner politics. 1: The German activities in Cameroon can be linked to this, through projects such as the Fachkräftefonds Migration und Diaspora, that is aimed at finding employment for Cameroonian citizens who are willing to return to Cameroon. 2: This project should be viewed in the context of the inner-German migration debate that is heavily focused on the reduction of migration by seemingly any means necessary. In light of this donor interest, development aid is simply one tool to utilize in the national debate.

56 Kemedjio, C. (2022). The economy of humanitarianism. In The Oxford Handbook of the Economy of Cameroon.

III.3. AN ATTEMPTED QUANTIFICATION

Preface

Any calculation of climate debt will be both

- → very uncertain since the calculation of climate costs is very complex and the attribution to a country even more so
- → reductionist since it gives the impression that if Germany simply pays the debt, all injustices are compensated for.

In reality, only a certain part of climate debt can be compensated financially. Other parts, especially those in relation to colonial actions that did not result in emissions, require other forms of compensation. Finally, many impacts can never be compensated for, since people's lives were affected long ago, and the changes are irreversible.

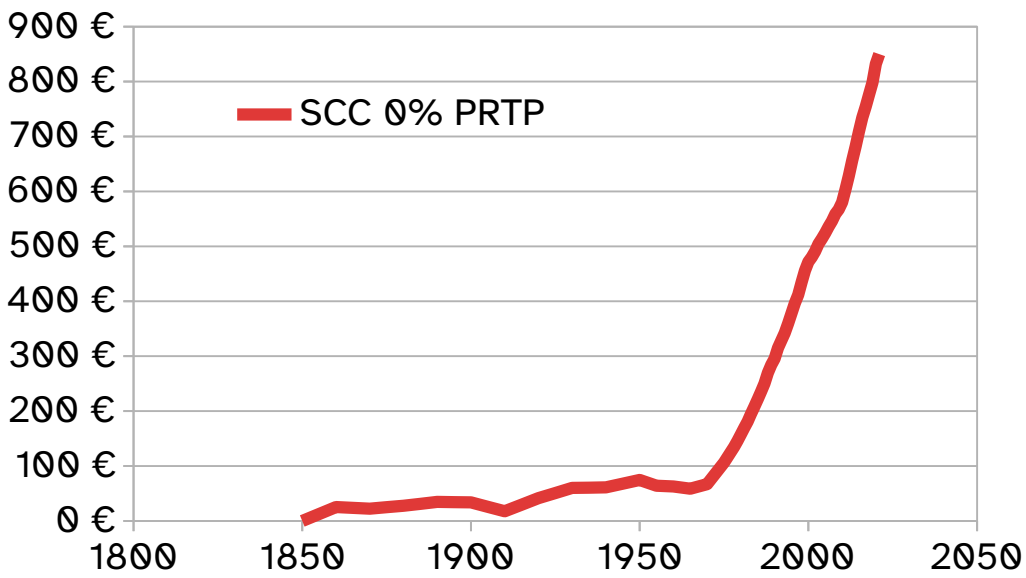
Still, financial compensation should be a part of climate reparations since it can be used to improve people's lives, reduce emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change and increase resilience. And if it should be a part of reparations, the difficulty of calculating the costs should not keep us from not trying, since we rely heavily on numbers when taking action in today's world.

In the following we describe our method for calculating Germany's debt. Instead of a complex modelling exercise, we chose to use an approach that is simple and transparent, so that everybody can understand the calculations and decide themselves how credible they seem to be.

For our calculation we used four types of data,
a) the social cost of carbon (SCC),
b) GHG emissions of Germany and Cameroon,
c) the GHG-concentration in the atmosphere and
d) the population numbers for Cameroon and Germany.

The social cost of carbon is the most important for the calculation while at the same time being the most imprecise and complex. The social cost of carbon (SCC) is an estimate of the cost of the impact caused by the emission of one more tonne of carbon dioxide at any point in time.[57] The SCC is calculated by adding up the impacts "for as long as the extra tonne remains in the atmosphere – a process which requires a model of atmospheric residence time and a means of discounting economic values back to the year of emission". This process is not a purely mathematical task as it is influenced by many moral choices.[58] Values for this figure thus vary. For our purposes we used the most recent SCC suggestion given by the German Federal Environment Agency.[59] The figure given here is 880€/t CO_2 for the year 2024. To calculate the historic SCC we chose to assume a linear relationship between the concentration of GHG in the atmosphere and the SCC.[60]

Figure 1:
Calculated Social Cost of Carbon



Calculated Social Cost of Carbon

57 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2007). Climate change 2007: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Chapter 20: Africa. http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg2/en/ch20s20-6.html

58 For example, how high is the discount rate and should equity weighing be used.

59 https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/publikationen/methodological-convention-32-for-the-assessment-of.

60 Since the latest available year for GHG concentration is 2021 we chose a slightly lower SCC than given by the UBA, 850€/t and 285€/t respectively. Furthermore, we assumed no SCC for the natural concentration of GHG in the atmosphere of 280ppm.

III.3. AN ATTEMPTED QUANTIFICATION

After establishing the social cost of carbon, we calculated the climate debt of Germany by multiplying yearly emissions from 1990 to 2020 with the SCC of these years. Using this approach, the total social costs caused by Germany's GHG emissions from 1990 to 2020 amounts to €16.1 trillion. This calculated carbon debt amounts to almost 20% of the total GDP generated during this time period.[61] By subtracting the climate debt of the world towards Germany (using the same approach and multiplying it with the share of the German population of the global population) we arrive at the net climate debt of Germany: it amounts to almost €7.5 trillion. These figures indicate that a large share of the German GDP is created through the externalization of costs to other countries (with GHG emissions being one of those externalities).

Figure 2:
German Climate debt in comparison to German GDP

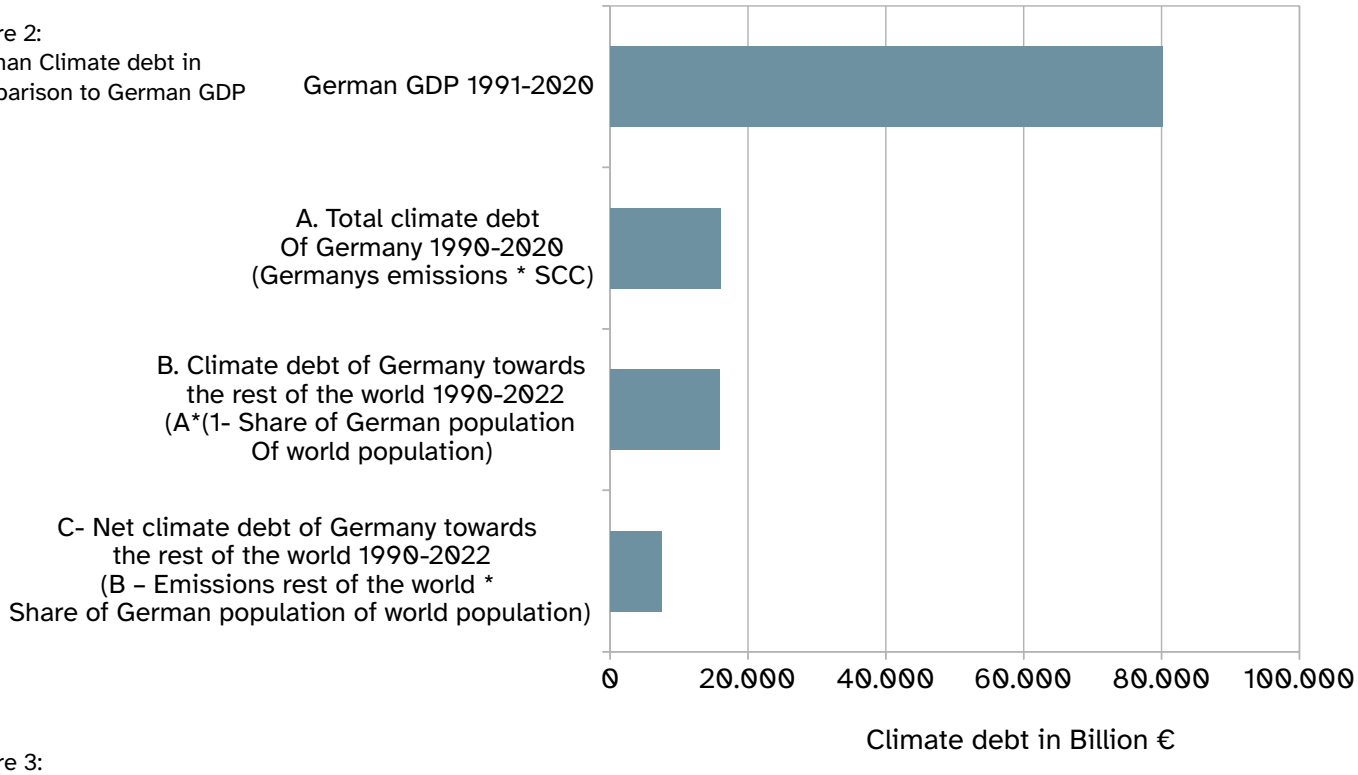
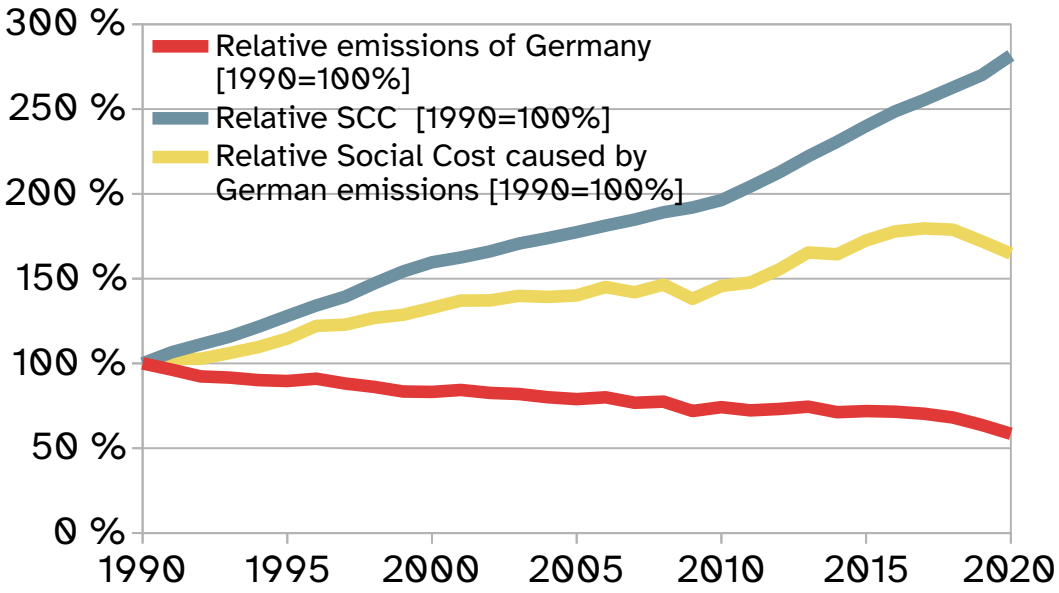


Figure 3:
The relative emissions of Germany, the relative SCC and the resulting relative Social Cost caused by German emissions (all compared to 1990)



61 Since no GDP for Germany for 1990 is available this figure compares climate debt and GDP for the years 1991–2020.

To calculate what share of this debt is owed to Cameroon we multiplied the climate debt of Germany with the share of the Cameroonian population of the total global population. To consider the fact that Cameroon itself has also emitted CO_2 which led to damages in Germany, we repeated the whole procedure for Cameroon and subtracted Cameroon's debt vs. Germany from Germany's debt vs. Cameroon.
Calculated this way, Germany's net climate debt towards Cameroon for the timeframe of 1990 to 2020 amounts to almost €38 billion.
The following points should be kept in mind when viewing this number:

- → The calculation assumes an even distribution of the costs of an emitted tonne of CO_2 to everyone. In reality, climate change has very different impacts in different parts of the world, due to the distribution of climate impacts and the vulnerability of the region to climate destruction. The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative lists Cameroon as the 55th most vulnerable country while Germany is the 10th least vulnerable country.[62] The impacts of colonization are an important reason for this (see chapter I and II).
- → Assuming a linear relationship between SCC and GHG concentration in the atmosphere leads to an overestimation of the SCC if—which is probable—costs actually increase in an exponential fashion. However, fitting an exponential function would involve coming up with an arbitrary curve which we decided against for reasons of transparency.
- → Since we value future and present costs equally, we chose to use a pure rate of time preference (PRTP) of 0%.[63] If a rate of 1% were used, the value for Germany's total climate externalities changes to €5.4 trillion and the debt of Germany towards Cameroon to €12.6 billion.
- → The SCC used was calculated using equity weighing, meaning that all damages from climate change are treated as if they happened in Germany, i.e. if a school is destroyed by a flood, the costs of repairing a school in Germany is used. This was done since climate reparations were not paid in the past and thus the social cost of climate destruction was carried by the Cameroonian people. In other words, and for the integrity of the example, a loss of school days is as damaging for a Cameroonian pupil as it is for a German pupil. The opposite approach, assuming that the destruction of a school in Cameroon creates fewer costs (since it is cheaper to rebuild), would have resulted in a lower debt.
- → We used territorial and not consumption-based GHG emissions. Territorial emissions include all emissions from processes (fabrication, transport, electricity production..) within the boundaries of a country. Consumption-based GHG emissions further include emissions from products consumed in Germany but produced elsewhere, i.e. imported products.[64] Using the latter would increase Germany's climate debt.

62 Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index (ND-GAIN). (2024). University of Notre Dame.
The connection between colonization and vulnerability are described in chapter I and II.

63 For a short explanation of the PRTP see https://www.e-education.psu.edu/earth104/node/1135, for a longer discussion:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_discount_rate#%22Pure_time_preference%22_debates.

64 The emissions of exported products are vice versa subtracted.

III.4. PATHWAYS OF FINANCIAL REPARATIONS

After establishing the need for financial reparations for a just transition, the question arises what this can look like in concrete terms. While this publication offers an in-depth analysis of the relations of Germany and Cameroon to expand on the historical reasons why reparations are necessary, discussions on reparations have been most present on an international level.
While the sketched out pathways have the benefit of being concrete measures, it is important to note once again the limitation of financial reparation measures. They cannot take into account centuries of pain, count immeasurable loss and do not replace the central "guarantee of non-repetition" which in relation to questions of climate justice must result in a fundamental overhaul of the current political and economic system.

Reparations on a multilateral stage

The international community is involved in potential mechanisms of reparations. While it will probably take a deep overhaul of the financial system and a mosaic of solutions, there are some concrete pathways.
One approach is to **cancel the debt** of the Global South. Many countries are in the middle of a debt crisis: they cannot service their debts, need to take on even more debt, and are trapped in a vicious cycle. Debt cancellation is necessary because the debt itself is unjust and the debtor-creditor relation reproduces neo-colonial structures. Former colonies were forced to take on large amounts of debt at very unfavourable conditions. The debt load hinders states to take action against the climate crisis, as there are not enough funds to make communities more resilient and implement protective measures.
Beyond the alleviation of current unjust burdens of the Global South, more proactive measures are discussed in the form of the **loss and damage fund**. It was created at the COP (climate conference) in 2022 and has since been operationalized. The fund is supposed to pay for the losses and damages of the climate crises that cannot be restored, whether due to extreme weather events or slow onset events that led to gradual degradations such as desertification. It was set up to support so-called "developing" countries—a category in the COP negotiations—and fills a gap in international climate finance as it does not fund adaptation or mitigation, but actually tries to repair damage that has been done. The damage can be "economical" which refers to quantifiable damages such as the destruction of a school, or "non-economical" which accounts for damage such as a loss of culture. The money is given as grants and not loans—the funds thus do not need to be paid back.
The establishment of the fund is the result of decades of campaigning coming from countries of the Global South. In 1992, as the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) was created, Vanuatu proposed on behalf of the Small Island States a loss and damage mechanism; 30 years later it has become a reality.
However, it enjoys almost no financial backing. As of 2024, a mere $731.15 million were pledged by countries to become actionable support. At the COP29 in Baku, this lack of funding was not sufficiently addressed.[65]
In addition to reparations between states, other imaginable pathways include **forcing the most polluting companies** to pay directly or establish a tax for this purpose, such as a financial transaction tax. The latter would take money out of the financial sector to redirect it towards reparation movements. However, some NGOs have noted that reference to these mechanisms have been used by countries of the Global North to escape responsibility. Governments claim that funding for reparations should be taken from corporations, while maintaining the judicial systems that makes the enforcement of these claims extremely difficult.
As noted above, providing reparations requires a mosaic of action. Multilateral measures, notably the loss and damage fund are important mechanism that need to be utilised, but they should be supported by bilateral measures, that are able to take into

65 Loss and Damage Collaboration. (2024). Loss and damage: What was decided and what comes next? https://www.lossanddamagecollaboration.org/link-page/loss-and-damage-at-cop29-what-was-decided-and-what-is-next

Debt cancellation is necessary because the debt itself is unjust and the debtor-creditor relation reproduces neo-colonial structures.

account country specific colonization histories. As this publication has shown, the climate crisis and colonialism are intertwined and need to be taken on together. During our workshop in Cameroon, participants have called for a prioritisation of former colonies in regards to financial flows aimed at combatting the climate crisis. This line of reasoning brings us to the possibility of bilateral measures.

On bilateral measures

Bilateral action, i.e. action between two distinct countries, is useful at times since it is better adapted to take into account specific colonial crimes and can also be utilised when deliberations seem to be stuck at a multilateral level. One concrete example of these claims are the ongoing claims towards Britain due to its colonial actions and exploitation. Island states of the Caribbean have been rallying for reparations from its former European colonizers.[66] However, it has only been through the visits of British heads of state in their former colonies that claims have been highlighted and public attention has been raised.

With regards to bilateral climate, reparations that have become a reality, there has been support of New Zealand towards the island state Vanuatu.[67] The transferred amount only amounts to $4 million, however, thus representing little more than a symbolic gesture.

Bilateral action can offer possibilities for movement organisation. In the context of the German-Cameroonian relation, it is important, for example, to shed light on Germany's colonial past and illustrate its long-lasting consequences, as this topic is quite unknown to a broader public.

Lawsuits

Lawsuits are used more and more to sue big emitters, and are also utilized in the fight for climate reparations.[68] The South Pacific island state Vanuatu is taking legal action before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in order to seek an advisory opinion on climate reparations. Unfortunately, the opinion of the ICJ is not binding, so it can only push the needle in regards to the question of who is responsible for paying reparations.

The questions of reparations is a question of political power

While the discussions above were very technical, the question of reparations remains one of political will, which in turn is influenced by the strength of movements and interests of key players. It is important to keep in mind potential pathways for financial reparations, while noting that the question of reparations is not dependent on choosing the perfect mechanism, but on building power that can enforce these claims, and to see the questions of reparations as a systemic issue. **It is not only necessary to fight for reparations, but also to dismantle the very system that has made them necessary.**

66 Caricom Reparations Commission. (n.d.). Caricom's 10-point reparation plan. https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/

67 Daadler, M. (2024, November 18). NZ to sign $4m climate reparations deal with Vanuatu. Newsroom. https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/11/18/nz-to-sign-4m-climate-reparations-deal-with-vanuatu/

68 Spring, J. (2024, May 21). Climate court cases that could set precedents around the world. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/climate-court-cases-that-could-set-new-precedents-around-world-2024-05-21/

CLIMATE REPARATIONS FROM GERMANY TO CAMEROON – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE DEBT AND GERMAN COLONIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As a result of the exploitative practices of Germany and other colonizers, Cameroon has been confronted with devastating social and environmental impacts that continue to pose a challenge to the country even today. Lacking the financial resources necessary to adapt, have left Cameron vulnerable to the effects of climate change and unable to cope with persisting socio-economic inequalities. While Germany has benefited from a mode of development based on the use of fossil fuels that has led to the current climate crisis, the burden of the crisis is now being borne by countries like Cameroon that have contributed very little to global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, climate reparations are necessary to redress this wrong and hold industrialized countries like Germany accountable for their historical responsibility. This publication explores the relationship between German colonialism, climate vulnerability and adaptability of Cameroon and makes a case for climate reparations from Germany, with a focus on financial reparations. It includes a calculation of Germany's debt to Cameroon and possible pathways for financial compensation.

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