

## **Social Structures and Inequality in Africa**

The current discussion on African middle classes shows that neither the empirical reality of African societies with all their inequalities, nor conceptual developments in the social structure debate in sociology are adequately taken into account. Up to date an adequate approach to the analysis of inequality and social structures in sub-Saharan Africa is missing. A first problem is that the existing concepts were developed for the Global North, and that this fact has not been properly considered before applying them to sub-Saharan Africa. Secondly, international debates on the analysis of socio-cultural differentiations are dominated by Anglophone authors, and some very useful approaches developed in the German-speaking countries have been ignored; in particular this applies to the lifestyle and milieu approaches. Thirdly, approaches that have been applied in Africa at different times and from different perspectives are also ignored. Against this backdrop the first aim of the book is to bring together concepts from social structure analysis in sociology to form a multi-dimensional framework. The second aim is to integrate into this general framework knowledge about inequality and social structure in Africa from fields such as political sociology, poverty studies, economics, social anthropology, gender studies, geography and political science. Thirdly, because of the complexity of social structures and patterns of inequality in Africa, an attempt will be made to adapt and extend the existing sociological concepts, so that the book will contribute to the development of a "global sociology".