

Blockchain for Good: the untold story leading from the UN to AXIS

Twenty years of reflection on financing African
development



Long version

Introduction — From Blockchain for Good to the origins of WinstantGold

Blockchain for Good 2026: unexpected recognition — On June 4th and 8th, 2026, Hervé Lacorne, CEO of Winstant Ltd and co-founder of WinstantGold, participated in the Blockchain for Good conference in Paris. For many observers, this presence seemed to place WinstantGold firmly within the recent news surrounding blockchain technologies applied to sustainable development. However, the event did not mark the beginning of an adventure. Rather, it represented its provisional culmination. Behind this international recognition lies an intellectual, political, and human journey that began nearly twenty years earlier, well before blockchain became a topic of global debate.

Behind WinstantGold, a much longer history — WinstantGold was not born from a single intuition or the sole genius of an entrepreneur. The project is the result of a long process involving political leaders, development experts, institutional partners, and several key figures who played a decisive role in its development, including Élie Doté and Hervé Lacorne. Before the tokenization of natural resources, there were the challenges of local development. Before blockchain, there were grassroots communities. Before AXIS, there were the Presidential Programs for the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources (PPV2RN). And before PPV2RN, there was a persistent question: how to sustainably finance African development without endlessly perpetuating mechanisms of economic dependency?

Back to the early 2000s — To understand the origins of WinstantGold, we must go back to the early 2000s. The United Nations then placed the Millennium Development Goals at the heart of its international action. In this context, the Sport for Development and Peace movement gradually emerged, supported notably by Ban Ki-moon, and later Adolf Ogi. The idea was ambitious: to use sport as an instrument for peace, education, social cohesion, and sustainable development. It is within this dynamic that the journey recounted in this article begins. No one imagined at the time that this reflection on financing infrastructure for grassroots communities would lead, two decades later, to the creation of WinstantGold and its integration as the first pilot project of the national AXIS program in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

1. The time of the MDGs and sport as a development tool

Africa mobilized around the Millennium Development Goals — In September 2000, the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, which gave rise to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the first time, the international community set specific objectives for poverty reduction, access to education, health, gender equality, and human development. Africa naturally became one of the main areas of application for this global ambition. Governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and private actors mobilized around a shared conviction: development is no longer solely an economic issue; it directly concerns people, territories, and grassroots communities.

The birth of the sport for Development and Peace Movement — In the early 2000s, an idea gradually emerged that may have seemed surprising at the time: sport could become a tool for sustainable development. Long considered a mere pastime or entertainment, sport is beginning to be analyzed as a tool for education, public health, social cohesion, and conflict prevention. This reflection is rapidly gaining momentum within the United Nations system. Pilot programs are being launched in several regions of the world to assess sport's capacity to contribute concretely to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gradually, what will be known as Sport for Development and Peace, or SDP, is emerging.

The vision championed by Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon, and later Adolf Ogi — Behind this dynamic are several key figures who play a decisive role. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, actively supports the idea that sport can contribute to development goals and the promotion of peace. With Ban Ki-moon's arrival at the head of the UN, this movement begins to develop and is gradually integrated into major international development policies. Adolf Ogi, former President of the Swiss Confederation, became the United Nations Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace and traveled the world to promote this innovative approach. For many stakeholders on the ground, sport then became a recognized instrument for social transformation.

My recruitment within this international dynamic — It was in this context that I joined this adventure, following the World Sports Alliance initiative, launched by President Alain Lemieux and supported by Mohammed VI, King of Morocco. Long convinced that development must start from local communities, I was called upon to participate in this dynamic led by the United Nations. My involvement gradually led me to work with various African and Latin American governments that agreed to commit to promoting development through sport. This experience allowed me to closely observe the expectations of these governments, the strategies of international agencies, and the difficulties encountered when it comes to translating global objectives into concrete achievements on the ground.

An intergovernmental organization dedicated to development through sport — This involvement led to a particular responsibility when I was appointed by World Sports Alliance to a diplomatic post, with the support of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The ambition was considerable. It wasn't simply a matter of organizing local sporting events or designing national educational programs. The goal was to use sport as a springboard for developing infrastructure, strengthening youth integration, fostering social cohesion, and supporting territorial development strategies. For the first time, sport was being considered as an element of a public development policy.

Why sport emerged as a catalyst for local development — On the ground, sport offers several advantages that explain the interest it generates. It mobilizes young people, facilitates dialogue between communities, promotes public participation, and often helps to overcome political or ethnic divisions. A sports field can become a place for education, health, violence prevention, and social integration. In several African countries, this approach resonates with public authorities, who see it as a relatively simple way to create social cohesion while supporting local development goals. Sport thus appears as a catalyst capable of uniting numerous stakeholders around common projects.

Public-private partnerships as a hoped-for financial engine — Very quickly, however, a question arises. Projects may be relevant, communities mobilized, and authorities convinced, but their sustainability depends on funding. The idea of using public-private partnerships capable of providing new resources for development programs is gaining traction. The goal is not simply to finance sporting competitions but to build sustainable infrastructure: fields, training centers, educational facilities, energy installations, and agricultural projects linked to community needs. For several years, a large part of our efforts has focused on finding innovative financing mechanisms capable of sustainably supporting local initiatives.

Burundi as a first laboratory — Burundi is among the countries where this thinking is taking concrete form. Emerging from a long period of conflict, the country is seeking solutions to sustainably stabilize its territories and offer opportunities to young people. The projects developed in this context combine sport, education, local development, and infrastructure. Burundi is gradually becoming a true laboratory for experimentation. We are testing new approaches there based on cooperation between public institutions, private actors, and international partners. The experience is rich in lessons and demonstrates that grassroots communities are ready to take ownership of ambitious projects when they directly perceive the benefits.

First successes on the ground — Several initiatives are achieving encouraging results. The programs engage young people, enhance the visibility of local communities, and help to structure previously nonexistent partnerships. Cooperation networks are established between government agencies, economic actors, and grassroots organizations. These successes confirm the relevance of the approach. However, they also reveal a significant limitation. As long as projects remain small-scale, funding can be secured. But as soon as it comes to building sustainable infrastructure, financing essential facilities, or considering large-scale programs, the difficulties quickly become apparent.

The question that changes everything: who will sustainably finance infrastructure? — It was at this moment, in 2012, that the question arose which would gradually shape all the thinking in the following years. Who will sustainably finance the infrastructure necessary for the development of grassroots African communities? States have limited resources. International donors finance certain programs, but according to priorities that do not always coincide with local needs. Private partnerships often encounter institutional or financial constraints. Gradually, a deeper question emerged. Why must countries with considerable natural resources look abroad for the means to finance their schools, health centers, sports facilities, or energy infrastructure? This question, still vague at the time, would become, in September 2012, the starting point for a much broader reflection on natural resources, economic sovereignty, and the future Presidential Programs for the Development of Natural Resources.

2. The invisible wall: the limits of the international financing model

When projects become structural — In the early years, initiatives undertaken within the framework of Sport for Development and Peace are generally well received. Youth programs, educational activities, awareness campaigns, and sporting events naturally align with the priorities of international donors. Difficulties arise when projects scale up. As soon as the focus shifts to building permanent infrastructure, creating sustainable economic mechanisms, or financing facilities capable of permanently transforming a region, the procedures become more complex. The stakeholders change, deadlines lengthen, and resistance gradually becomes apparent.

The transition from activities to infrastructure — This evolution reveals a fundamental distinction. Funding a temporary activity is one thing. Funding infrastructure capable of permanently altering the economic balance of a region is quite another. A sports tournament, an educational program, or an awareness campaign requires limited budgets and short-term commitments. Conversely, the construction of a sports center, a local energy network, an educational complex, or a major infrastructure project requires larger investments and a long-term vision. It is precisely when we try to cross this threshold that the difficulties become most apparent.

The resistance encountered — Initially, these obstacles seem purely technical. Administrative procedures are lengthy, funding is slow to be released, and negotiations become more complex. But as experiences multiply, particularly in Burundi, another reality emerges. The obstacles do not only concern the feasibility of the projects. They also affect their capacity to generate a form of economic autonomy. The more a project seems likely to produce sustainable resources or strengthen local financing capacities, the more difficulties it appears to encounter. This observation remains intuitive for now, but it marks the beginning of a reflection that will continue to deepen.

The constraints inherited from Bretton Woods — Gradually, the difficulties encountered lead to a broader analysis. Since the end of World War II, much of international development financing has been organized around the Bretton Woods institutions. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and major development banks play a crucial role in the economic policies of developing countries. These institutions have enabled the financing of many beneficial programs. However, they also contribute to structuring a framework in which states often have limited room for maneuver. Budgetary priorities, financing mechanisms, and investment strategies remain largely influenced by decisions made outside the territories concerned.

Why did some projects seem to be tolerated while others were blocked? — A question then began to emerge. Why do some initiatives receive relatively rapid support while others seem to generate more reservations? In retrospect, a hypothesis is gradually becoming clear. Projects with a social or humanitarian focus are generally compatible with traditional international aid mechanisms. On the other hand, projects likely to create independent financing capacities, strengthen states' own resources, or bring about lasting changes in local economic balances seem more difficult to implement. This observation does not lead to a conspiracy theory. It simply reveals the existence of institutional logics that favor certain forms of development over others.

The African paradox: potential wealth and financial dependence — At the same time, a contradiction is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. The countries in which we work often possess considerable natural resources. Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and several other African states have significant mineral, agricultural, forestry, and energy resources. Yet, their governments continue to face chronic budgetary difficulties and a strong dependence on external financing. How can we explain that a continent so rich in resources must continually seek external means to finance its development? This question is gradually becoming central to our thinking.

A new question of economic sovereignty — Until now, our work has focused primarily on local development, youth, sports, and community infrastructure. Gradually, another dimension is emerging. The difficulties encountered are no longer solely related to project financing. They concern the very capacity of states to decide their economic future. Behind budgetary issues lies a much broader challenge: that of economic sovereignty. Can a country truly be sovereign if it is perpetually dependent on external financial resources to fund its essential infrastructure? This question gradually became the central theme of the following years.

Dispersed experiences beginning to converge — The missions conducted in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and other African countries gradually ceased to appear as independent experiments. Behind the diversity of contexts, a common structure became visible. Everywhere, the same financing difficulties, the same institutional constraints, the same external dependencies, and the same paradoxes related to the development of natural resources were found. What initially appeared as a series of local problems then took on the form of a continental issue. It was precisely at this moment that the focus began to shift from development to sovereignty, and then from sovereignty to the natural resources themselves. In this pivotal year of 2012, this intellectual shift led to the Bangui Conversations.

3. Bangui 2012: the first spark

A mission that didn't go as planned — In September 2012, nothing suggested that one of my missions to the Central African Republic would profoundly alter the direction of my commitment. At that time, discussions were still largely focused on local development issues, community infrastructure, and funding mechanisms to support initiatives stemming from the Sport for Development and Peace movement. Like many other trips to the continent, this mission was intended to provide an opportunity to meet with executive authorities to explore new avenues for cooperation. However, given the tense political climate, events took an unexpected turn and opened up an entirely new field of inquiry.

Waiting for a presidential audience — During my stay in Bangui, a presidential audience was scheduled. As is often the case in African politics, scheduling conflicts meant several hours of waiting. What might have seemed like a minor setback would prove decisive. Far from official meetings, protocols, and prepared presentations, this waiting period creates a rare space for free and in-depth discussion. In the quiet of the garden where we meet, the conversations gradually move away from immediate concerns to address much more fundamental questions about the economic history of the African continent and the real conditions of its development.

The conversations in the Bangui garden — These conversations, in retrospect, constitute one of the most important moments of the entire journey that would later lead to PPV2RN and then WinstantGold. For many hours, over several days, the discussions focused on the experiences accumulated since African independence, the development strategies implemented since the 1960s, and the sometimes disappointing results obtained despite the abundance of natural resources. Gradually, the discussions shifted from the realm of specific projects to the structural mechanisms that determine the capacity of African states to finance their own development. For the first time, questions of economic sovereignty took precedence over purely financial issues.

Meeting with a former Prime Minister and development economist — Among those present was Élie Doté, former Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, economist, and expert on African development mechanisms. His government experience, his mastery of economic issues and rural development, and his knowledge of international financial institutions brought a particular depth to the discussions. The conversation quickly moved beyond the usual analyses to return to a fundamental question: why do so many resource-rich countries remain dependent on external financing for their development? This meeting marked the beginning of an intellectual collaboration that would play a decisive role in the years to come.

Rethinking fifty years of African development — Discussions are gradually leading to a re-examination of several decades of development policies. Since independence, Africa has experimented with various models: state-led industrialization, structural adjustment programs, poverty reduction programs, international cooperation, public-private partnerships, and foreign direct investment. Each of these approaches has produced results that are sometimes significant but rarely capable of sustainably resolving the issue of economic autonomy. One conclusion is inescapable: despite the efforts made, the financing of African development continues to depend heavily on external resources. This dependence now appears as a central problem rather than a mere technical constraint.

Why natural resources become the central issue — It is at this point that natural resources gradually emerge as the heart of the debate. African countries possess immense mineral, forest, agricultural, and energy reserves. Yet, these riches do not automatically translate into an equivalent capacity to finance national development. The value created by these resources often seems to be captured elsewhere, in international processing, financing, or marketing channels. An idea then begins to take shape: the real problem may not be the lack of resources, but the lack of mechanisms to transform these resources into instruments of development and sovereignty.

The fundamental question: how can Africa be financed by its own resources? — As the discussions progressed, a simple formulation gradually emerged and would structure all future thinking: how can Africa be financed by its own resources? The question seems obvious. Yet, it marks a profound break with traditional approaches. Until then, the focus of discussions had been on seeking external financing to support development. Now, the reasoning is reversed. The question is no longer how to attract more foreign financial resources, but how to mobilize the resources already present within the territory so that they themselves become the engines of economic and social development.

The birth of the idea of Presidential Programs for the Development of Natural Resources — It was in this context that the idea that would later become known as the PPV2RN first emerged. The intuition was simple in principle but ambitious in its implications. Natural resources should no longer be considered solely as raw materials destined for export. They should become the foundation of a national strategy for value creation, development financing, and strengthening economic sovereignty. For the first time, a conceptual framework began to emerge to link natural resources, infrastructure, local development, and public policies.

From observation to the outline of a solution — The Bangui talks did not immediately produce an operational model. However, they opened up a new intellectual space. The challenge was no longer simply to denounce the limitations of existing mechanisms but to build an alternative. Gradually, the first elements of an architecture capable of linking natural resources to territorial development objectives took shape. The infrastructure intended for grassroots communities, which was the starting point of the discussion, is now being reintegrated into a much broader framework where national resources become the starting point for funding rather than its consequence.

The end of a period of critique and the beginning of a period of construction — In retrospect, Bangui 2012 marked an intellectual turning point. The preceding years had been devoted to observing, experimenting, and identifying the limitations of existing models. From this meeting began a new phase. The question was no longer why certain development policies failed, but rather how to design mechanisms likely to succeed. Natural resources gradually became the focus of reflection. Economic sovereignty ceased to be an abstract concept and became a concrete objective. Future reflections on Presidential Development Programs (PPV), Presidential Programs for the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources (PPV2RN), asset digitization, and ultimately WinstantGold, all originated in those particular days spent in Bangui, where a simple presidential expectation transformed into the first spark of a project destined to evolve over more than a decade.

4. PPVs: from intuition to architecture

Why an idea is not enough — The days spent waiting in Bangui had allowed for the formulation of a new question and the glimpse of a possible direction. But an intuition, however relevant, does not constitute a development policy. Between an idea and its implementation lie considerable institutional, financial, legal, and operational constraints. In the wake of the 2012 discussions, the challenge, therefore, is to transform a still largely conceptual reflection into a framework that can be understood by public decision-makers, supported by economic partners, and applied in very different national contexts. A new phase begins: that of the methodical construction of a model.

The first schemes for valuing natural resources — The work undertaken in the following months aims to answer a simple question: how to transform a natural resource into an instrument of development? The initial outlines seek to link the riches of the subsoil and the territory to the concrete needs of the population. The objective is no longer solely to extract or export raw materials, but to organize mechanisms that allow for the conversion of a portion of their future value into investments useful in the present. Gradually, the first value-added models are emerging, linking natural resources, infrastructure, financing, and local development within a single economic framework.

Mines, forests, agriculture, and energy within a single framework — One of the significant advances of this period is the move beyond traditional sectoral approaches. Discussions are no longer focused solely on mineral resources. Forests, agricultural land, water resources, and energy potential are progressively integrated into a single analytical framework. Despite their diversity, these assets share a common characteristic: they represent real wealth capable of supporting national development when properly identified, valued, and governed. This comprehensive approach represents a break with models that treat each sector independently.

The principle of pre-financing development — A central idea is gradually emerging. Rather than waiting for resources to be exploited and then for the revenues to be redistributed, why not use their economic potential as a lever for financing development? This reasoning leads to the concept of pre-financing. Natural resources cease to be seen as mere future export commodities. They become strategic assets capable of supporting transformative investments once their value is properly recognized and organized. This approach paves the way for mechanisms entirely different from those that usually dominate development financing.

Infrastructure as an end in itself — Despite the evolution of thinking, the end in itself remains unchanged. Since the early experiences of Sport for Development and Peace, the central issue remains that of the infrastructure needed by grassroots communities. Schools, health centers, sports facilities, energy networks, agricultural infrastructure, and water access systems continue to constitute the concrete objective sought. Natural resources do not become an end in themselves. They appear as the instruments for sustainably financing the infrastructure that populations need to improve their living conditions and strengthen their development capacities.

Grassroots communities as beneficiaries — This orientation fundamentally distinguishes future PPVs from purely extractive models. The logic developed has never been to maximize revenues derived from natural resources for their own sake. The objective remains territorial development and the improvement of living

conditions for the population. Grassroots communities remain at the heart of the system. Natural resources are viewed as a means of financing concrete projects for the benefit of the territories. This concern, inherited from Sport for Development and Peace, remains one of the guiding threads linking the initial reflections of the 2000s to subsequent developments.

Initial strategic choices — As the model takes shape, several strategic choices must be made. Should mineral resources be prioritized or should a multi-sectoral approach be adopted? How can private investors be involved without compromising sovereignty objectives? What role should public institutions play in the governance of the system? How can the immediate needs of the population be reconciled with the long-term constraints linked to resource development? These questions fuel numerous discussions and contribute to gradually shaping the architecture of future programs.

The issue of controlling value chains — This work also leads to a significant realization. The problem lies not only in the possession of resources but also in the control of the value chains associated with them. A resource can be abundant yet generate little benefit for the country that possesses it if the mechanisms for processing, financing, certification, or marketing are controlled elsewhere. This observation leads to broadening the discussion beyond extraction itself. Value creation becomes a comprehensive process that involves controlling several strategic links, often located outside the national territory.

The role of states in the governance of the system — This reflection naturally leads to a redefinition of the state's role. The natural resources in question are strategic assets whose management commits the country's economic future. Therefore, their development cannot be left solely to market forces nor depend exclusively on external actors. The State gradually emerged as the central actor capable of ensuring the coherence of the system, protecting national interests, and guaranteeing that the generated benefits effectively contribute to the development of the territory. It is this conviction that would later lead to these mechanisms being described as "presidential," emphasizing their strategic and national dimension.

From PPVs to Presidential Programs for the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources — At the end of this period of maturation, the intuition born in Bangui began to take on a more precise institutional form. The initial frameworks gradually evolved into what would become the Presidential Programs for the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources. Behind this name lies a clear ambition: to place natural resources at the heart of a national strategy for development, infrastructure financing, and strengthening economic sovereignty. The project remained largely theoretical, but its foundations were now laid. A new phase would soon begin, one that would lead from PPVs to PPV2RNs and prepare for the integration of digital technology into this developing architecture.

5. From PPVs to PPV2RNs: the change of scale

Why the first generation needed to evolve — The first Presidential Development Programs represented a significant step forward compared to traditional development approaches. They made it possible to link natural resources to the needs of local areas and to place the state at the heart of the value creation strategy. However, as the work progressed, their limitations also became apparent. The initial frameworks remained primarily focused on the mobilization of physical resources. They partially addressed the issue of infrastructure financing but still insufficiently addressed the problems of economic sovereignty, asset governance, and control of value chains. An evolution became necessary to address the now much broader challenges.

The Central African and Congolese experience — The discussions initiated in the Central African Republic found unexpected repercussions in other countries, notably the Democratic Republic of Congo. The two states have different characteristics but share several fundamental realities: exceptional wealth in natural resources, considerable infrastructure needs, and a persistent dependence on external financing. The involvement of talented entrepreneurs and the discussions held with policymakers, development experts, and economic stakeholders allow for the testing of initial hypotheses against realities on the ground. This phase is essential because it gradually transforms a theoretical framework into a reflection adapted to the concrete constraints of African states.

The Chinese Model — During this period, attention also focused on the Chinese experience in Africa. Since the early 2000s, Beijing has developed numerous partnerships based on a relatively simple principle: linking the exploitation of natural resources to infrastructure development. Roads, dams, railways, energy networks, and public facilities are financed through long-term agreements backed by strategic resources. For many African observers, this approach appears as an alternative to traditional development financing mechanisms. It therefore deserves careful study.

What Sino-African agreements revealed — The analysis of these experiences highlights several important lessons. On the one hand, natural resources can indeed serve as the basis for financing mechanisms capable of rapidly producing essential infrastructure. On the other hand, the agreements concluded demonstrate that alternatives exist to models based exclusively on traditional debt or international aid. This observation is fundamental to the ongoing discussions surrounding future PPV2RN. It confirms that it is possible to design models in which natural resources directly contribute to financing national development rather than intervening only after their exploitation.

What they did not resolve — However, these experiences also reveal their limitations. Sino-African agreements generally remain structured around bilateral relationships where technology, financing, engineering, and sometimes even resource exploitation remain largely controlled by external actors. They enable the financing of infrastructure but do not fully address the issue of economic sovereignty. How can we guarantee that the value created remains sustainably controlled by the states involved? How can we build autonomous national capacities rather than simply financing mechanisms? These questions are gradually leading us to move beyond the existing model and seek a solution better suited to African ambitions.

The need for an African model — This reflection is leading to a growing conviction: Africa must develop its own model for leveraging natural resources. This means neither reproducing the mechanisms inherited from Bretton Woods nor simply copying agreements developed by other economic powers. African realities demand a specific approach that takes into account the needs of the population, the role of the state, the requirements of sovereignty, and the diversity of available resources. This search for an African model is gradually becoming the intellectual driving force behind the evolution of PPVs toward a new generation of programs.

The rise of the PPV2RN concept — It is in this context that the concept of the Presidential Program for the Sustainable Development of Natural Resources, or PPV2RN, is gradually emerging. The term "sustainable" is not insignificant. It reflects the desire to move beyond a purely extractive approach and integrate natural resources into a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development, governance, and value creation. The PPV2RN does not simply aim to exploit resources. It seeks to organize their development in a coherent manner so that they contribute directly to financing development, modernizing infrastructure, and strengthening national capacities.

Natural resources, development, and sovereignty — With the PPV2RN, the issue of natural resources definitively ceases to be a purely economic matter. It becomes a question of sovereignty. Resources are now considered strategic assets capable of supporting national development while strengthening the state's decision-making autonomy. This evolution represents a significant break from previous approaches. Development is no longer solely a matter of investment or international aid. It becomes the result of the ability to transform national wealth into instruments of economic, financial, and institutional power.

The gradual integration of financial dimensions — As the concept is refined, financial dimensions occupy an increasingly prominent place in the work. The valuation of resources presupposes the creation of mechanisms capable of recognizing their value, securing it, and mobilizing it for the benefit of public policies. Discussions then focus on asset certification, governance structures, financing mechanisms, and the infrastructure necessary for their implementation. This evolution is gradually preparing the way for the entry of a new player into the narrative: the digital age. Because very quickly, a question arises: How can such complex assets be secured, tracked, and effectively managed at the national level?

A now coherent architecture — By the end of this period, the essential elements of the PPV2RN are in place. Natural resources are identified as strategic assets. Infrastructure development remains the ultimate goal. Grassroots communities remain the ultimate beneficiaries. The state is recognized as the guarantor of the system's governance. Economic sovereignty becomes the structuring objective. One crucial element is still missing: the infrastructure capable of ensuring the traceability, certification, and security of the entire system. This question will open the next phase of the story, the one where the digital revolution will meet the insights born a few years earlier in Bangui.

6. The second spark: digital technology enters the scene

Bangkok and the first thoughts on digital finance — As PPV2RNs gradually reach a satisfactory level of conceptual maturity, a new question arises: How can assets potentially spread across multiple territories, economic sectors, and generations of projects be managed? During the 2010s, international debates on digital finance, asset dematerialization, and new financial infrastructures garnered increasing attention. At several exchanges in Asia, particularly in Bangkok, the idea began to emerge that the digital revolution could provide solutions to some of the challenges encountered in natural resource governance. For the first time, digital technology was no longer seen as a mere technical tool but as a structuring element of the future architecture.

The confluence of natural resources and tokenization — Around this time, blockchain began to gradually move beyond the realm of cryptocurrencies. Researchers, entrepreneurs, and institutions explored new applications related to the certification, traceability, and digital representation of real assets. This work is of particular interest because it addresses several concerns already present in the PPV2RN. How do we identify an asset? How do we certify its existence? How do we track its value over time? How do we create shared trust mechanisms? Gradually, the idea is emerging that natural resources could benefit from these new digital infrastructures capable of linking the physical world and the world of information.

The role of Élie Doté — In this new phase, Élie Doté continues to play a crucial role. Since Bangui 2012, his work has focused on mechanisms for transforming natural resources into instruments of development and economic sovereignty. His experience as a former Prime Minister, his knowledge of international financial institutions, and his mastery of governance issues help to avoid a major pitfall: that of considering technology as a solution in itself. The discussions held during this period constantly reiterate that the ultimate goal remains the development of populations and the strengthening of states' capacities. Digital technology is considered only as a means of securing and amplifying an already defined strategy.

The role of Hervé Lacorne — It is also at this point that Hervé Lacorne's contribution becomes crucial. An entrepreneur specializing in digital technologies and financial innovation, he brings complementary expertise to the discussions that have been underway for several years. While the PPV2RN has helped define economic and political objectives, digital technologies now offer the possibility of considering their large-scale operational implementation. Exchanges between the various skills brought together around the project are gradually building a common language between development, economic sovereignty, financial engineering, and technological innovation.

Bangui 2017: digital technology elevated to the highest levels of the State — Five years after the initial spark, Bangui is once again a central location in the project's evolution. In 2017, discussions on the valorization of natural resources now intersect with those concerning digital technologies and new forms of asset governance. The subject is no longer debated solely among development experts or practitioners. It is gradually reaching the highest levels of the state. This development marks a significant milestone. For the first time, the digital transformation of natural resources is being considered not as an isolated technological experiment but as a potential element of a national development strategy.

Digital sovereignty as an extension of economic sovereignty — One idea then becomes central: economic sovereignty cannot be sustainably ensured without a form of digital sovereignty. If natural resources are to become strategic assets, their identification, certification, management, and valuation require reliable information infrastructures. And whoever controls information often controls a portion of the value. This realization leads to a broadening of the concept of sovereignty. It is no longer solely about controlling physical resources but also the digital systems that allow them to be represented, managed, and integrated into contemporary economic mechanisms.

Securing before digitizing — This period is also marked by significant methodological caution. The goal is not to digitize resources simply to follow a technological trend. Before any digitization, the very foundations of the system must be secured. Property rights must be clarified, resources identified, governance mechanisms defined, and certification procedures established. Technology can only be implemented once the assets it represents are themselves clearly recognized. This requirement for rigor will later contribute to profoundly distinguishing the approach developed around WinstantGold from many purely speculative initiatives that have emerged in the blockchain world.

From mine to market — The work is gradually leading to the design of a complete value creation chain. The focus is no longer solely on resource extraction but on their entire economic journey. From mine to market, including certification, governance, traceability, and financial valuation, each step must be integrated into a coherent architecture. This systemic approach constitutes one of the main innovations of the methodology. It allows us to move beyond the traditional logic that a resource quickly leaves the territory without the country possessing it being able to control all the value-creating mechanisms.

The birth of WinstantGold — It is in this context that WinstantGold was born. Created in September 2017, the project represents the culmination of several years of reflection on economic sovereignty, natural resources, and new digital infrastructures. Contrary to some simplistic interpretations, WinstantGold is not designed as a cryptocurrency or a standalone financial product. It appears as a laboratory intended to explore how digital technologies can contribute to the responsible valuation of natural resources and the strengthening of economic sovereignty. Its originality lies precisely in this direct link with the work undertaken since Bangui 2012.

The transition from PPV2RN to a digital instrument — With WinstantGold, PPV2RNs take a decisive step. The principles developed over the previous years now find a technological support capable of strengthening their implementation. The concepts of traceability, certification, asset governance, and value creation can be integrated into a coherent digital infrastructure. The project is still in its development phase, but its foundations are now clearly established. For the first time, natural resources, economic sovereignty, and digital technologies are brought together within a single strategic framework. This convergence would pave the way, a few years later, for the pilot projects conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the integration of WinstantGold into the national AXIS program.

Conclusion — Twenty years to build the same answer

From Blockchain for Good to Bangui — On June 4th and 8th, 2026, Hervé Lacorne's participation in the Blockchain for Good conference in Paris might give the impression that WinstantGold's story belongs primarily to the world of blockchain and digital innovation. However, the journey tells the exact opposite story. Blockchain appears at the end of the process, not at the beginning. To understand the project's true origins, one must leave the international conferences on emerging technologies and return to the garden of a presidential residence in Bangui in 2012. It was there that a discussion about financing African development gradually transformed into questions about natural resources, then about economic sovereignty, before encountering, several years later, the opportunities offered by digital technology.

Why WinstantGold is not the work of a lone entrepreneur — Like many high-profile innovations, WinstantGold could be presented through the journey of a single entrepreneur or a single company. Such an interpretation, however, would be incomplete. The project is the result of a collective effort that brings together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds: policymakers, development experts, public institutions, economists, field practitioners, and digital entrepreneurs. The contributions of Élie Doté and Hervé Lacorne naturally occupy a central place in this story, but they themselves are part of a much longer-standing reflection initiated within the framework of development programs supported by the United Nations. WinstantGold is less the product of an isolated invention than the convergence of several experiences accumulated over nearly two decades.

A collective endeavor spanning almost twenty years — When we trace the thread of events, a remarkable continuity emerges. The initial ideas arose within the context of the Millennium Development Goals. They continued through the Sport for Development and Peace movement and the experiments conducted for the benefit of grassroots communities. They then encountered the limitations of traditional international funding mechanisms before culminating in the foundational exchanges in Bangui. Then came the Presidential Development Programs, their evolution into the PPV2RN, the gradual integration of financial dimensions, and finally, the encounter with digital technologies. Each step addresses the questions left open by the previous one. Nothing appeared suddenly; everything was built up gradually through experience, successes, failures, and encounters.

From the MDGs to AXIS: the same question remains unchanged — Behind the diversity of projects, countries, and periods covered, a fundamental question has remained the same since the early 2000s: How can grassroots African communities sustainably benefit from the resources of their own territory? Initially, this question concerned the financing of sports, educational, or social infrastructure. It then broadened to include development financing mechanisms, the development of natural resources, and the economic sovereignty of states. Today, this legacy continues with WinstantGold and the AXIS national program developed in the Democratic Republic of Congo under the high patronage of President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo. The tools have changed. The concepts have been enriched. The technologies have been transformed. But the central question remains: how can we ensure that African resources primarily serve the development of African populations? It is this continuity that links the MDGs, SDGs, PPV2RN, WinstantGold, AXIS, and now Blockchain for Good in a single narrative.