

## **ETHICAL PORTFOLIO: "GLOBALIZING CONTAMINATIONS".**

*Made by Massimo Briani.*

The photographic portfolio entitled "GLOBALIZING CONTAMINATIONS" was among the finalists at the PORTFOLIO SIFEST 2018 international award (Italy). This photography project is the result of a one-month period lived in Africa from Kenya to Tanzania. In the 1950s and 1960s, the European colonial powers gradually ceased to administer their African territories. The process of "apparent decolonization" led to the gradual departure of all the expatriate personnel of the colonizing nations: administrators, soldiers and all those who had settled in the "colony". This process favored the creation of independent states and paved the way for new foreign influences over those of the colonial powers. The important mineral resources present throughout the African continent combined with export-oriented agriculture make it a continent particularly subject to speculating foreign influences. These speculative influences can be of a very varied nature: they may concern the presence of directors and administrators at the highest political ranks but also concern the establishment of multinationals, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Over time, language and religion have become dangerous vectors of foreign influence. Therefore, after some years living in Africa, I came to ask myself: "How has the influence, after decolonization, of European countries evolved in the face of the emancipation of African countries and the competition of new powers?" Decolonization leads to a decrease in European influence in Africa. In the 1950s and 1960s, European powers progressively granted independence to their colonies in various contexts. In some countries, especially in the British colonies such as South Africa, it is a process of emancipation of states already autonomous in their internal administration. In other cases, the change is more radical: in settlements like Algeria, several million people begin an inexorable exile in suburban France. However in the "ex colonies" the entrenchment of the colonizing nation's language, religion and even laws remains important. The transmission of this "culture" can be explained by obvious reasons of ease of communication and standardization in "colonial empires", but this proselytism is not limited to a practical or commercial objective. Indeed, some European countries, starting with France, believed they had a "civilizing mission". In his speech to the Chamber of Deputies of July 28, 1885, Jules Ferry says that "the European nations are discharging themselves largely, with grandeur and honesty, of this highest duty of civilization". Many missionaries begin to evangelize entire African populations and today 60% of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa are Christian. The construction of schools has spread European languages so that the official languages of African countries have over time become those of the "ex colonizers": English, French, German, Portuguese, etc. Aware of cultural indoctrination, the "ex colonizers" seek to perpetuate this influence through international organizations. The "Commonwealth" for example, created in 1931, brings together most of the states of the former British colonial empire. This organization has 19 African countries participating in the meetings of heads of government which take place every two years, as well as the "Commonwealth Games". Thus also France created the "International Organization of the Francophonie" which includes no less than 24 African countries. This facility has offices in many countries but its headquarters are in Paris. France is the organization's main financial contributor, accounting for nearly half of its budget. Therefore, despite the equality of principle between the members, France and the United Kingdom occupy a privileged place within their respective organizations, which shows that these structures are indeed vectors of influence for them.

African countries are increasingly dependent on their “ex colonizers” economically. The CFA franc was introduced by France in 1945 and is used by 14 African countries divided into two zones: UEMOA and CEMAC. Beyond the name inherited from the “colonial era”, the CFA franc is in fact an instrument of influence since it is at fixed parity with the euro and its convertibility is ensured by the French Treasury. CFA franc banknotes are also printed in France. A new currency called “Eco” is expected to replace the CFA franc in several countries, but it should also be backed by the euro, which would keep its users dependent on France and the euro zone. Furthermore, the “ex colonizers” exploited the continent's many raw materials by establishing an unequal trade relationship with their colonies. It involves producing raw materials such as agricultural products, minerals or hydrocarbons in exchange for manufactured goods. This pattern largely continues and European oil groups such as BP (British), Total (French) or Shell (Dutch) are still established across the continent. We can add companies from other sectors such as Orange for telecommunications or Nestlé for the food industry. Finally, some North African countries receive significant foreign direct investment from European groups. The latter are establishing themselves in this region to benefit from low-cost labor and reduced transport costs and times. For example, the Renault group set up a factory for its low-cost brand Dacia in Tangier, Morocco. Therefore, despite the decline in European influence that we talked about in the first part, Europeans retain an important influence. By colonizing Africa for several decades, they rooted their culture in their colonies and created economic dependence. Aware of this heritage, they have created international organizations to maintain cultural closeness with their “ex colonies”.

Emerging countries, including China, India and Brazil, are also developing their “African strategy”. This strategy aims to exploit the continent's natural resources and even open up new export opportunities. During her presidency from 2003 to 2011, Lula Da Silva sought to strengthen her relations with Africa. He made no less than 11 trips to the continent and opened several embassies, relying in particular on proximity to Portuguese-speaking countries. For his part, China cannot boast historical proximity, but uses no less convincing economic and financial instruments. The country, in fact, finances many infrastructures, such as the Ethiopian electric train from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, through loans or access to raw material deposits. India is also expanding its influence on the continent and can count on a long-established diaspora in East Africa. Finally, Russia seems to want to make a return to the region, as evidenced by the economic cooperation agreements signed in 2017 with Sudan. Therefore, the so-called emerging countries compete with Western influence in Africa. These countries offer agreements without the obligation to respect “human rights” which can be seen as less intrusive than Western ones. Furthermore, the more authoritarian regimes of emerging countries attract some countries, who see them as a guarantee of stability while their democracies are often unstable and plagued by corruption.