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Photo by Barbara Menin

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Ghana: commodification of water

The conquest of African resources and the responsibility of Europe



SUMMARY

Part 1: “Water, an African business”

- 1.1 Ghana: a country rich in resources page 7
 - 1.2 When water becomes a business page 9
 - 1.3 Hands off the water! Civil society says no! To privatization page 13
 - 1.4 Between commercialization and rights page 16
-

Part 2 “Africa-Europe, dangerous liaisons”

- 2.1 Partnership between Africa and Europe page 18
 - To go deeper: Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between Europe and ACP Countries page 20
-

Part 3 “Water: human right and common good”

- 3.1 Partnership agreements with Europe page 22
- 3.2 Access to basic goods and services in Ghana page 24
- 3.3 Self-defence handbook of human rights and common goods page 27



PREFAZIONE

edited by Luca Martinelli, Altreconomia

The water thread that links us to Ghana (via Ireland)

In Ireland, since January 1st 2015, the way to access drinkable water has changed. In particular, thanks to a reform approved in November, citizens are asked to start paying for the water they have consumed at a price, through the introduction of New Domestic Water charges, that varies according to the actual composition of the family and to the installation, or not, of a counter that measures the consumption. The first bills should arrive in April 2015 and they concern aqueduct and wastewater. The protest that aroused in the Irish population, who consider unfair the decision of the government, is driven by a simple assumption: "We are workers, we are taxpayers, and we have already been paying this service through the fiscal system of our country", as explained by one of them in an interview (broadcasted on the Network Radio Popolare on December the 10th). The subheading of this statement is that – in Irish people's view – water is (still) a right, not a commercial good, and as a consequence they don't agree with the novelty. They don't believe in a government that justifies the introduction of these tariffs on the need to realize new investments on the network ("In Dublin there are more than 800 kilometres of networks older than 100 years", as Alan Kelly, the Minister for the Environment, explained in a press conference). The situation of Ireland may appear distant to an Italian citizen, who has been going through the consequences of the transformation of the water, as well as the integrated water service, in a commercial good/merchandise for more than twenty years (the most recent law for the reform of the water service is the Law Galli, which

dates back to 1994). As much distant as it may appear the situation of Ghana, related by Silvia Cardascia in this dossier based on a field research which points out how the recognition – even in the Constitution – of the water as a fundamental human right is not yet enough to assure the access to an adequate service to the citizens. And yet, in Ireland as in Ghana, what are we speaking about is – all things considered- just money, the financial means to ensure the exercise of one's rights, acknowledged as such even by the United Nations. That's why the Irish and the Ghanese instances have something to say to Italy (too), to the country which in June 2011 massively voted a referendum to say "No to proprietors in water services, no to profits on water". Of the two questions, in my opinion, the crucial one was the second, on the composition of the tariff of the integrated water service. By choosing to erase the item "remuneration for the investments" that is part of our bill, together with "cost of the service" and "expense for the investments", the message to the institutions from the organizing Committee "2 Yes for water as a public good": the expenses for the investments must be taken in charge by the general taxation, as it was in Ireland before the latest reform. In this concept lays the assumption that "water is a public good" is not just a slogan but rather a "political project", an option and an orientation for the ruling class. Since the funds to sustain and boost the public expenditure are in place, as it is proved in our country by the Sblocca-Italia (Release-Italy) Act, and what needs to be found is just some courage to decide how to use them.



INTRODUCTION

The new face of poverty in Ghana

Rashid is 30 years old and teaches French in the Gilrs Secondary School of Accra, capital city and megalopolis of Ghana. He speaks a fluent English and French and is part of the Zongo community, word that in the local language denotes in a contemptuous way the migrants who lives in the slums of the chaotic urban centres of the Western African country. His family comes from one of the poorest areas of the northern Ghana and moved to Accra searching for a better life in the 80s. That was the period of the "great exodus", when thousands of migrants moved in mass from north to south, to escape from drought, poverty and starvation. The phenomenon of migrations contributed to the massive and messy overpopulation of the towns. In line with the tendencies in the rest of Africa, population of Ghana is becoming over and over urbanized. In 2010 the percentage of people who lived in urban areas was 59,9%, compared to 43,8% of 2000, and an increase up to 63% is expected by 2025. The fast urbanization was ascribed to a complex mix of factors, among them the reclassification of the villages in cities and the difficult climatic conditions in the northern regions, which fostered the movements towards the southern coasts.

The interior migration contributed also to the upraise of urban poverty and the development of informal settlements of migrants' communities. The metropolitan area of Accra is an especially striking example of the impact that migrations can make on the growth of towns, both in terms of population and space. **Nima, Maamobi, Old Fadama** are just some of the shantytowns of Accra where migrants have settled more than 40 years ago. Phenomena like the exclusion from the "native" neighbourhood, xenophobia and poverty have determined the concentration of migrants in these areas. These are sites who arise in the urban shantytowns, whose features are an high density of population, unsafe and run-down buildings, overpopulation, poor hygienic conditions, scarcity of access to basic services like drinkable water and lavatories. The overall number of people living in the shantytowns has arisen from 4,1 millions in 2001 to 5,5 millions in 2008. The slums have folded a new face of poverty, hosting thousands of migrants in conditions of human and social neglect/decay. Rashid's parents live in Nima, the greatest shantytown of Accra.

The community is located at about 8 kilometres north from the capital city centre. Its boundaries are the Kanda Highway (which divides with geometric precision the rich neighbourhoods from the slums), the Girls Secondary School in the North and Odaw, the greatest open air dump of the city. Odaw is also a landmark to distinguish the end of Nima and the beginning of its twin community Maamobi. The lack of a town plan and the presence of irregular migrants makes it difficult to make an accurate evaluation of the number of residents, which is, in Rashid's opinion, around 200 thousands people.

Its rich and diverse ethnic composition (these are groups from all regions of Ghana with a high concentration from the north) finds its cultural synthesis in the predominant religion that is Islam. It is a little **Muslim microcosm** in the heart of a country with a Christian majority.

Despite being adjacent to the city, the neighbourhood of Nima is struggling with a **very lacking** supply of water. The area is served by the public company GWCL, but the pumped water is often lost because of the malfunctioning of infrastructures and does not get to the homes for weeks, sometimes months. This forces the families to purchase water from water vendors or to use of boreholes (mechanical wells) and polytanks (tanker trucks for the storage of rainwater). The most "ingenious" install abusive pumps on the central distribution system risking fines and handcuffs in a State where water is considered a matter of "national security." Far worst the situation of public hygiene in the community: private latrines are a commodity that only a few can afford and public lavatories cost. As a consequence Nima has turned into a big open-air "toilet" and in a place where diseases like typhus and cholera are part of everyday life of its inhabitants. Although Ghana is ranked among "middle income" Countries by the World Bank, its rapid urbanization has produced social and environmental degradation, unfair distribution of wealth and increase in the number of slum dwellers. Rashid was lucky. He was able to study, get a job and conduct a decent lifestyle. But it is not easy, he says, especially in a country that does not guarantee the basic services to its citizens. **"Water is life and everyone has the right to drink"**, he asserts vehemently while driving his car along the dusty and teeming roads of Nima.

WATER, AFRICAN BUSINESS

Edited by Silvia Cardascia

1.1

Ghana: a country rich in resources

If the wealth of a country could be measured by the abundance of resources of the subsoil, **Ghana would be one of the most prosperous states of the sub-Saharan Africa.** The mining of gold, which pushed/drove Dutch, Portuguese, Danish, Germans and finally English to colonize the area that not by chance was named Golden Coast, makes it the second African producer of the noble metal, after South Africa. With an overall sales volume of 3 billions dollars in 2013, cocoa bean is the leading export product. Ghana is in fact the second world exporter, after the nearby Ivory Coast. Considerable deposits of manganese and bauxite add to the recent discovery of oilfields, which last year replenished the State's cashes/treasury with 700 millions dollars. With the record hike of GNP in 2011, increased by a rhythm of 15% a year thanks to the discovery of the Black Gold, Ghana occupies nowadays a place among the "middle income" economies in the

Everywhere in Africa the development process is distorted, priorities violated and the continent mortgages its soil.

Ali Al'amin Mazrui, historian and Pan-Africanist scholar (1933-2014)

World Bank's ranks. Nevertheless, when resources are traded between unequal, even natural resources like cocoa and nuggets engender poverty instead of wealth. In Ghana, like in its neighbouring countries, the export of raw materials is the **primary cause of the economic and social imbalances.** The mining of gold and crude oil have engendered an economic structure that is highly dependent on the fluctuations of prices on the international export markets and characterized by a huge external debt. The absence of a rational plan for the long-term conservation of the resources and the ecological balance associates with an inconsistent/incoherent administration of public finances. The debt has risen from 9 to 23 billions of dollars in 3 years only. According to the evaluations of the Ghanaian Ministry of Finances, the incomes from petroleum should have guaranteed a cash flow in the amount of 5 billions of dollars by 2015. Miscalculated previsions, since the mining of crude oil has yielded around 700 millions of dollars between 2010 and 2012, bringing about a heavy fall in price of the national currency, the cedi, and consequently giving rise to a whirling hike of prices and cost of living. As in the script of an ever-repeating story, Ghana is currently in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund to

implement an economic restructuring program. The IMF, the World Bank and the African Bank for Development will be the orchestra leaders that will conduct a concert based on the injection of foreign capitals, fiscal adjustments, rebalancing of the public debt, austerity and reduction of the public spending. Ghana would be once again an "IMF prisoner", quoting a BBC article of 2001. For the financial institutions that distribute loans for development of developing countries it is once again the case of telling the neoliberal fairy tale, where the invisible hand of monetary and fiscal policies relight almost by magic the engine of growth. But which growth and which development are we speaking of? According to the data of the United Nations agency for Development (UNDP), Ghana will be one of the few virtuous countries of the region that will achieve the first of the "Development Millennium Goals": **halve extreme poverty by 2015.** By the way, an upstream analysis of poverty must take into account one of its main elements: inequality in the access to basic services like water, hygiene, health and education. Morphology of inequalities underlines the divide between the North and South of the country and the gap between urban and rural areas. The climate in the far North, where there is a single and short rainy season and scarce rainfall, is the main cause for drought and endemic poverty in the northern regions. The phenomenon of migrations widens the gap of social imbalance: the densely populated towns of the southern coast, migrants of the north in search for better life and work conditions. However, the "high cost of living" makes the disorderly and chaotic urban centres not accessible to the most. Therefore the migrants searching

3 BILLION \$
the cocoa turnover

15%
the annual GDP growth
from 2011 in Ghana

700 MILLION \$
the value of oil
extractions

23 BILLION \$
the foreign debt

Ghana Economy



YOUNG GHANAIAAN DURING THE DAILY WATER SUPPLY, AXIM, GHANA

Photo by Barbara Menin

education, health and fight against corruption, to free the Ghanaian people by the yoke of external capitals. After the 1st of July, the national demonstration of 24th July took place, organized by the Trade Union Congress. The participation of civil society, student associations, unemployed, shop keepers and single activists was massive, to manifest against the high cost of living, the peak of inflation, the high unemployment rate among young people, the heavy-handed reduction of the public expenditure and the dependence on export of raw materials. What trade unions, NGOs and activists ask for are public investments in agriculture, transport and proper infrastructures. Investments that allow making chocolate in Ghana instead of importing chocolate bars processed in Europe with Ghanaian chocolate. In other terms, they ask the sacrosanct right to food sovereignty to be respected and guaranteed by a real "industrial revolution". It is demanded the disorderly urbanisation to be followed by a rationally planned industrialization which encourages the domestic processing of raw materials and transform the import-export into an healthy exchange between equals, giving back to people their natural wealth. It is requested that the depreciation of the currency does not affect the access to common goods such as water and food. Access to water and basic sanitation becomes again today, as it had already happened ten years earlier, the reason for the street protests of the citizens and the first signs of a "Ghanaian spring" that questions the political choices of the government and the prevailing trend in many African countries to delegate the development process to the international financial institutions and privates. If the uprisings for the access to bread have been the basis for the Mediterranean Countries' mobilizations, the growing awareness of the processes of expropriation of land, water and natural resources, reasons for the growing levels of poverty and inequalities, are the core of the mobilizations in the squares of Accra and other African towns.

for luck easily become slum dwellers. Access to drinkable water is still inadequate especially in the urban areas and sanitation services are the real sore of the Country. Diseases like typhus, cholera and "worm of Guinea" (caused by the consumption of contaminated water) have to be ascribed to the scarce hygienic conditions, the lack of lavatories and to water that runs or runs not from the faucet. **More than 60% of Ghanaian does not have access to basic sanitation services and 80% of the childhood diseases result from the consumption of not potable water and the pollution of aquifers.** The challenges that the ex Ivory Coast must face are directly proportional to the fast urbanization rate of its metropolis and capital Accra, where the overpopulation in the slums and in the sub-urban area make the water and health issues worst. Just a few months ago, the peripheral areas of the capital have been struck by a new cholera epidemic. The pipes and the pumps date back to the beginning of the 20th century and water is often contaminated. Illegal mining activities run by unskilled Chinese workers have caused a massive pollution of rivers. The public management of water resources, **after the 5 years long of**

half-privatization, is not supported by a clear political vision, which aims to guarantee a widespread access in the territories and quality. The scarce participation of the communities in its management and supply is corollary of a constitutionally guaranteed corollary: water is property of the State, more than of its people. The current deterioration of the economic situation in Ghana and the increasing inflation of the local currency have caused a hike in the prices of essential goods: first of all, water and food. The recipe "less State more market", tailored ad hoc by the International Monetary Fund, falls back not only on the poorest classes, but also on the rising/new Ghanaian middle class, compelled to pay more taxes to cope with own government's debts. The resentment of the middle class manifested last first of July in Accra, where a group of "Ghanaian concerned by a responsible governance" (as they define themselves) marched towards the Flagstaff House, golden stool of the government, to present a petition to the President John Dramani Mahama. The movement, which has been given the name of Occupy Flagstaff House, asks the government to invest massively in policies that foster occupation,

1.2

When water becomes a business

In sub-Saharan Countries land and water are resources that traditionally belong and are managed by the local communities, outside market logic. Water is life and has a inherently spiritual value, especially in rural communities. The wearing away of the access to water, both in terms of availability and traditional management by the community, results in a form of expropriation, a phenomenon that appears more and more in forms in different regions of Ghana. **This phenomenon is defined "Water Grabbing"**, to describe the processes which takes away basic natural resources like water, land and food from the control of communities and people for the benefit of public or private subjects driven by speculative purposes. Water grabbing manifests in different ways, in Ghana as well as in other African countries: through the activation of breeding or production chains that make an unsustainable consumption of water, privatization of the water services and aqueducts management, the relocation of communities to make place for the building of dams, the militarization of the access to water canals, the expropriation of the means of subsistence of fishermen and shepherd, the penalization of poverty. Many of these phenomena of grabbing and expropriation of natural resources are peculiar to Ghana, but the process of commercialization and privatization of the management of water resources in this Country is an example that deserves to be retraced in its main phases. In the old times,

"Water is not a commercial good. Privatizing water means commercializing life of every living being."

CICMA (Italian Committee for a World Contract on Water - Comitato italiano per un contratto mondiale sull'acqua).

when Ghana was not yet called Ghana nor Golden Coast, water belonged to its tribal communities, according to Common law. **Communities' right to water was deeply connected with right to land** and, inasmuch natural, it didn't originate from the State. It was mostly an usufruct right: water could be used but not owned.

The first phase of the misappropriation of water from communitarian management started in Ghana in the colonial period (1928), when for the first time water was pumped in the castles and stalwarts of the colonists.

When the Democratic Republic of Ghana was born in 1957, president Kwame Nkrumah launched the phase of "nationalization", that is to say the management of water was taken in charge by the State, with the elaboration of a scheme for the distribution and supervision of drinking water and the entrusting of the water supply to a public institution, the Ministry of Work and House in 1958.

In 1965 the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation was born, public body with the responsibility of providing the supply and management of the water resource for household and industrial purposes and sewer system.

The development plan, entrusted to a centralized institution, did not take into account the diverse configuration of the country. The elephantine structure of the GWSC tended to isolate the communitarian and district level and was not able to satisfy the demands for water above all in the rural and farming areas, both for alimentary and productive use. The national management model, through GWSC, was not able to satisfy these demands above all because of the missed involvement of the local communities in the decision making process about the distribution of water in their very own villages and it was therefore intended to implode. The following authoritarian government of the Military Council led by J. Rawlings,

instead of committing to giving back the management of water resources to rural communities, prepared the ground for the following privatization of the water sector on the basis of the belief that privates would bring the investments to ameliorate the infrastructures. The so-called 90s "reform" adopted by the Ghanaian government was shaped on the basis of the neoliberal policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which proposed the public-private partnership as most effective model.

The economic context of Ghana before the wave of privatizations was similar to that of most African countries over the 80s and 90s: economies characterised by huge commercial deficits of the trade balance due to the drop of export prices and the rise of import prices, with a consequent increase of public debt. The budgetary/financial disarray of the economy made it hence impossible to supply the state-controlled companies with the necessary support in terms of investments for their modernization and made them the "odd sick men" that it was necessary to slim down as soon as possible. These were the years of Washington Consensus and of the Dublin Conference of 1992.

Water started to have an "economic value in all its uses" and could be "recognized as a good with economic value". In the vein of the economic neoclassic school of thought, international multilateral financial institutions were so entrusted to treat water as a commercial good.

In Ghana, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund found an effective answer to the need to reduce public expenditure in the administrative decentralization.

The intent was to transfer as many fiscal and administrative competencies as possible from the central government to district assemblies and prepare a 5 years management plan with an annual allocation.

If the official justification for the reform was that fostering local participation

so to improve the performances of the central government, the real reason behind the manoeuvre was the cutting off the public expenditure. The reduction of budgetary deficit and external debt were in fact the usual priorities of the World Bank and IFM, above all in a heavily in debt country as Ghana. The answer to State insolvency was therefore translated into the transfer of the management of water and sanitation services to the districts and into extra fiscal burden on a rural population that was already endemically impoverished. Decentralisation policies, recommended by the two Bretton Woods institutions, were implemented through the so called unbundling, which often resulted in the splitting of the less lucrative sectors of a company from the more profitable ones, leaving the firsts to the State and opening the seconds to partnerships with privates. The process of "unbundling" of the water sector in Ghana thus was achieved in two steps.

1997

the Public Utility Regulatory Commission is established

1999

public facility is dismantled

The process of semi privatization

The first consisted in the splitting of the territory in urban areas and rural areas (less lucrative). After that, in 1999, the dismantling of the public structure GWSC, from whose ashes two parallel public companies were founded: the **Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL)**, in charge of the management, distribution and water supply in the urban centres, and the **Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA)**, for the coordination of the water and sanitation service in the districts and rural areas. In particular, the CWSA was entrusted with the task of coordinating and supplying technical assistance to the 110 district assemblies of the little

towns and rural communities. **District assemblies are still the equivalent of our Municipalities** and, under the umbrella of the CWSA, they administrate and manage the water supply and the set-up of sanitation services in the communities within their administrative authority. The GWCL, on the other hand, was and is still entrusted with the task to manage water service in the 110 urban districts and the responsibility to guarantee an adequate maintenance and repair of water infrastructures. The wastewater treatment, as well as the fabrication/building of lavatories and management of the sewerages, were and are under the responsibility of the urban authorities of the towns. In other terms, it was decided to split the State into first class areas (directly supplied by the centralized system) and second class areas (less lucrative, low-income areas). All the burden of managing access to water and hygiene services was dumped on local authorities,

FULL RECOVERY COST

the principle according to which all costs of water services must be covered by rates

with a virtually non-existent level of investments. It was then decided to slice/cut/divide rich areas from poor areas, relieving the central government from the duty to redistribute income and resources through cross-subsidisation, in accordance with the norms of social equity and overall well being of population. In 1997 the **Public Utility Regulatory Commission (PURC)** was set up, to guarantee an "adequate regulation of the water and electricity service", as Constitution reads. The PURC, which controls the prices of water tariffs, was born as an independent agency to protect consumers' interests through mechanisms of surveillance

and promotion of fair competition. However, **PURC's independence was questionable** because its members were appointed both by the President of the Republic, who moreover could dismiss them from their duty at any time, and by the executives of GWCL. Moreover, since its establishment, the PURC had been under repeated pressures from IMF and World Bank in order to ensure the respect for the principle of full recovery cost and of automatic tariff adjustment.

The first mechanism, also called **remuneration for the invested capital**, envisages that all the management costs and investments on the water supply network have to be paid by the citizens through the water bills. In other words, the price of water that is paid must cover the costs (the maintenance of the waterworks), the investments (extension of the aqueducts) and profitability (that is to say others' profit on the management of the water resource). The second principle, namely the **Automatic Tariff Adjustment (ATA)** is one of the conditions imposed by the World Bank and IMF when they grant loans to Developing countries. It is a tool that reflects the swing of the exchange rate and inflation of the local currency on the price of raw materials. Applying this mechanism to water means that higher the price of the currency is, higher the cost of water is. So in Ghana the process of commercialization of the country's water resources became a reality, making the access to water a need that could be satisfied only by paying the "water bill". The logic of the ruinous Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP) arranged by the World Bank and IMF in the 90s to support the "Developing Countries", the principle of full recovery cost and the automatic tariff adjustment protected the markets from the "macroeconomic imbalances" and made these Countries more attractive in the eyes of foreign investors.

As a consequence the water supply system became an economically relevant sector of general interest and water was no longer a common goods belonging to the communities but a "commodity". As the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana reads, water is property of the State. So, if the State

wants to sell it or to hand the concession/exploitation to the highest bidder to turn it into a business, it can do it by force of constitutional right. Decentralization, "rationalization" of the costs, reduction of the public expenditure, splitting of the stronger and more productive sectors from the weaker ones, fiscal adjustment, implementation of mechanisms to guarantee "macroeconomic stability" and transformation of the water into a commodity: the door was open wide to the first attempt to privatize the water services. Under the auspices of the international financial institutions, Ghana suddenly became "the model of Western Africa" to be followed and a Country with a high ranking in the World Bank's "Doing Business" classification. The highest bidder was a subsidiary company of the multinational corporation Eron, Azurix, that won the contract in a call for tenders where big companies such Suez and Vivendi were rejected.

But a suspicious cloud of corruption and bribes for a value of 5 millions of dollars obfuscated the outcome of the negotiation and the public-private partnership broke down in 1996, year of the presidential elections. In spite of the wide mobilization of civil society for the defence of public water, the second tranche of the loan allocated by the IMF as a part of the Ghana's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (another injection of cash flow to support the "development" of the Country) and the heavy external debt that the State's finances underwent imposed a new halt for the public management of water services.

A report of the time, edited by the World Bank, reads that the main leaks of the water sector laid exactly in the intrinsic "features" of the State management: inability to generate profit and attract foreign capitals, political interference in the decision making process, inefficiency of the services and inadequate level of expertise of State employees, that caused the malfunctioning of the plants and the inefficient maintenance of the infrastructures. To face the slowness and inefficiency of the public institutions, the World Bank suggested again to go private, as private sector plays within the harsh laws of market

PUBLIC TAP CLOSED
BY THE AUTHORITIES
AXIM, GHANA

Photo by Barbara Menin



and competition and it is therefore considered the best role model of economic efficiency. Private was considered effective since it guaranteed low costs of staff management (thanks to summary dismissals), a strictly commercial approach of problem-solving (profit oriented) and the isolation of political considerations (and social equity). This is about the same argument: private is good, quick and efficient whereas public is evil, submissive to political circumventions and short-term goals scheduled by elections. In light of these considerations as well as of the urgency dictated by the economic disruption of the country, the World Bank proposed as a win-win solution the adoption of the public-private partnership (PPP) between the GWCL company (the public company managing urban water supply) and a private company, in such a way discarding the burden of having to manage the "low-profit" rural water sector and the provision of sewage and sanitation services that remained locally administered under the decentralization scheme.

Therefore in 2005 a management contract was signed between **Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL)** and the South African Dutch multinational **Aqua Vitens Rand Limited (AVRL)**. It is useful to examine the fundamental aspects of contract that were the modernization of the public machinery, technical

assistance to the staff, maintenance of the plants, the reduction of the so-called "non-revenue water" and the widespread distribution of the water resource in the poorest urban areas as well. The management contract signed between the companies GWCL and AVRL dated five years (from 2006 to 2011) and required the multinational to be responsible for the management, operation and maintenance in 80 urban districts.

The GWCL company was also entrusted with the task of monitoring that the management company AVRL acted in accordance with the objectives that were set in the management contract. Moreover, GWCL went ahead alone in dealing with investments planning and asset management. At the expiry of the contract, the management contract would have been replaced by a "leasing" contract which was intended to complete the process of privatization with the shift from public to private not only of the management but also of the maintenance of infrastructures and water supply in its entirety.

The corporation would take charge of commercial and financial risks, becoming de facto a monopolist manager of water policies in towns and urban centres. As the analysis made by the Ghanaian NGO **ISODEC (Centre for Social Integrated Development)** pointed out, the very thrust of the contract was the origin of its own

future failure. One of the biggest flaws of the water supply system, to which the concession contract was supposed to give an adequate response, was the obligation to make maintenance-related investments.

The level of the investments made to cover the so-called "capital costs", i.e. the fixed costs independent of production and labour costs, was almost "zero". But these fixed costs cover the purchase of physical structures such as equipment, plants, machinery, pipes, pumps, i.e. the routine-administration costs that privates tend to put off to recover the invested capital as soon as possible. The urban water supply systems in Ghana were in fact deteriorated and out-dated (some dating back to 1914) and they caused substantial losses along the distribution network, thus inflating the percentage of non-revenue water volume. The latter represented in fact 49% of the distributed water and generated a loss of over 87.5 millions per year for a total amount of 601,969 cubic meters of water a day. A huge waste of a limited public resource. According to ISODEC's evaluations,

45%
wasted water due to
inadequate water systems

87,5 MILLION \$
waste per year

L'acqua sprecata

the cost for replacing and modernizing facilities, so as to make them functional and reduce losses, was around 1.25 billion of dollars. The funds that the World Bank instead put at its disposal for the management of the five-year contract AVRL- GWCL amounted only to 120 millions of dollars and there was no clause requiring the private to cover the difference. The disparity between the size of the problem and the proposed solution

1.25 BILLION \$
the estimated cost to replace
and modernize the water
systems in Ghana

120 MILLION \$
the current available funds

Network to be re-done, the money
is not there

was obvious since the beginning. The replacement and the modernization of the water infrastructure was not part of the competence and did not meet the interest of the public-private partnership agreement.

From the Leonard Shang's point of view, a Quartey of ISODEC, the errors that undermined the contract were three. The first resided in the agreement itself. Being a management contract, commercial and financial liability of AVRL was minimal. In fact, as stated, AVRL was guaranteed with a fixed share of remuneration (5 millions of dollars) plus the management of the 120 millions of dollars contract. It is evident that, with a guaranteed fixed amount of remuneration, the AVRL was not encouraged or forced to maintain high standards of performance in the provision of the service.

As a World Bank water and sanitation specialist in Ghana told: "Pay them well, and you'll see how they become efficient!", referring to the performance of the AVRL personnel.

The second problem of the contract, underlined also in an audit commissioned by GWCL and World Bank in 2011, was the low level of transparency due to a system of internal evaluation nearly absent. The lack of transparency and relevant information in the monthly reports drawn up by AVRL made it impossible to apply fines and penalties in the case where the water quality resulted lower than the established standards.

The third legal vice is connected to the second: the lack of a system of judicial protections in the case where AVRL did not comply with its

contract obligations. Not only it was not indicated an authority to be called upon for the resolution of a potential litigation between GWCL and AVRL but it was not even contemplated the possibility for GWLC to withdraw from the contract before its expiry date (i.e. in 2011).

It was an obvious legal trap skilfully packaged. In the period immediately following the signing the contract, however, the Dutch South African multinational had to deal with the expectations not only of its own employees but also of Ghanaian people, who believed the promises of the government and multilateral donors. Yet, in the total absence of infrastructural investments, AVRL was tied up in same tangle which the public manager had tried to extricate from a few years earlier: employees poorly remunerated, failure to reduce the percentage of non-revenue water, scarce water supply (a third of the urban population still had no access to clean water), very poor level of hygiene and an exponential increase of the diseases resulting from the quality water, often not drinkable. Furthermore, **the tariffs reached staggering figures, increasing by 80%**, in application of the principle of *full recovery cost*. In short, the management contract was a disaster and, when the expiry time came, it was not renewed. These are the contradictions and the critical issues that, together with the rage of the civil society, have allowed to initiate a process of mobilization, since 2011, in defence of the management of water by the Civil Society of Ghana, thus achieving to completely restore its management in public hands

80%
the tariff increase for water

2011
the mobilization starts

The unsustainable cost of water

1.3

Hands off water! Civil society says "no!" to privatisation

With the slogan: "Water is for life and every life is important, the local NGO ISODEC (Integrated Social Development Center) started a public debate on the reforms for the water sector in Ghana in May 2001. In the same years there was a deployment and mobilization of the Water Movements around the **"Manifesto of Water as Human right and Common good"** issued in Lisbon in 1989 by a group of economists thanks to a campaign promoted by the Italian Committee for the World Water Contract (CICMA). The manifesto was presented at the 1st World Forum of Porto Alegre (2001) together with a call to the social movements, especially those based in Latin America and African countries, to mobilize in order to oppose the proposal advanced in the 2nd World Forum of Ajia and sponsored by the major multinational companies (March 2001) to classify access to water as an "individual need" that every citizen/consumer can meet on the basis of his own purchasing power rather than a human right guaranteed by the State. It is in this context that the mobilization of the Ghanaian civil society took shape against the privatization model experienced in the country.

ISODEC was invited to take part in a seminar, held in Brussels in March 2000, organized by the Committees that in several countries supported the principles of the Manifesto for the World Water Contract. Realized with the support of the European Parliamentary Group of the Green Party, this meeting allowed to analyse the management experience currently

"Water is life and every life is important"

National campaign against the privatization of water (NCAP), Accra, 2001

experienced in Ghana and encouraged the representatives of this association to organize a mobilization as soon as they came back to Ghana. Thus they gave birth to the Ghanaian platform of stakeholders, with the objective to organize a forum in Ghana to focus on the threat that Water management represented in the context of poverty and public health. In conclusion of the Forum – that had a massive participation of the civil society but also of ministers and governmental officials- the "Declaration of Accra" was released, a programme-document approved by 64 Representatives of various organizations of the civil society. Thus the **National Campaign Against Water Privatization (NCAP)** was born, promoted by ISODEC and chaired by the Trade Union Congress of Ghana (TUC), the largest union in the country. The goal was to impede the proposal of the World Bank to re-launch the privatization of the management in the water sector.

The major multinational companies that were candidate at that stage were Suez, Vivendi (now Veolia), Saur and Biwater. **The highlights of the Declaration were:** mobilization of Ghanaian Civil Society to block the access to foreign companies in the sector of water distribution and supply; direct involvement of citizenship in making decisions about the alternatives for the Reform of the water sector; Reform proposal for the public water sector; transparency and accessibility for civil society representatives to all documents related to the transaction proposals, call for tenders and negotiations with the private sector; public funding; access to water for all the Ghanaian people on the basis of a statutory right, by 2008. The NCAP, a multi-faceted and cross-cutting network of the Ghanaian civil society, in fact argued that the privatization of water represented a serious threat to public responsibility, the process democratization of the

country, the equity, the achievement of the objectives related at the reduction of poverty, to the local participation and the rights of women.

For this reason, the Coalition engaged in research activities, awareness raising, networking, campaigns to collect signatures, seminars and local initiatives. The response to the launch of the campaign was immediate and was given space in TV debates, in public meetings, on talk shows, in newspapers and radios. Government officials and the World Bank answered that it was not about privatization but rather "participation of the private sector" and incited the people "not to listen to those communists claiming the right to water and free commodities for everyone". However, the very extensive work made by NCAP helped to strengthen the national and international awareness around the sensitive issue of the privatization of water and it had an effect on medias as no other had ever made in the history of social movements in Ghana.

Ghanaian people, in fact, had already experienced the effects of the policies that "prepared" to the privatization of the water resources set up by the government, IMF and World Bank: in 2001 tariffs increased exponentially by 95%. The conditionality of the international credit institutions, neoliberal policies and full recovery cost, all had a negative impact on consumers, who had to pay the full cost of operation and maintenance of the service. However, the majority of Ghanaians could not afford to pay a high price because more than 50% of the population earning less than a dollar a day and more than 40% lived below the poverty line.

The result was that about 35% of Ghanaians He had no access to drinking water and 68% had no access to services basic sanitation. Those who could It allow, spent from 10% to 20% of the their salary to pay the bills water.

Vertically, the NCAP was organized in local committees, actual units within communities, which aimed to raise awareness and strengthen networks in the territories in a bottom-up perspective (from the bottom upward). Campaign counted three coordinators: a national coordinator, a north coordinator and a south one. Horizontally, the NCAP had two souls: a more "movement-oriented" soul, characterized by the so-called grassroots groups of local activists; and a more structured one made up by local NGOs. The Campaign was partly financed by the same NGOs that were part of it, in part by outside donations. The Dutch NGO Oxfam Novib was one of major donors until 2010, year when Ghana became a middle-income Country and therefore could not receive any longer much of the funding reserved for low-income ranked countries. Among NGOs and the most active organizations in the ranks of NCAP there were, besides ISODEC (who was its promoter) and the TUC (Trade Union Congress of the Ghana), religious organizations (such as the Christian Council), networks of non-governmental

pan-African organizations (Third World Network Africa) and networks for the defence and protection of Ghanaian Women's social and political rights (as the Network For Women's rights, that called itself the Campaign's "gender eye"). Despite the massive mobilization on a national scale, the World Bank approved in 2004 a loan of 120 millions of dollars for the privatization of the urban water supply networks and in 2006 the multimillionaire Vitens Rand Water Limited (AVR L) signed a contract with the Ghana Water Company (GWCL) baptizing the first public-private partnership experiment. The same year, **Rudolf Amenga-Etego - founder and coordinator of the Campaign - won the Goldman Environmental Prize 2004**, in recognition of his work and his civic, social and political engagement. Meanwhile, the NCAP extended its network of alliances both in the African continent and on an international scale, finding support in the rising Movement for Water that had initiated, on the momentum of the World Water Contract, some Alternative World Water Forums and World Social Forums. In January

2007, in view of the World Social Forum in Nairobi (Kenya), for the first time a Pan African network against privatization water held a meeting. The coordinator of the regional African network was Al-Hassan Adam, a member of NCAP, and in that occasion he publicly attacked the policy of the World Bank, arguing that it would create "large imbalances between those who can afford to buy water and those who can not be provided of this money". In **February 2007 the African Water Network was born**, a network with more than 250 activists belonging to different African civil society groups, including the NCAP. The effects of the privatization became evident in Senegal, where the private management was characterized by the absence of investments to modernize the networks and increases of 3% from 1996 until 2004, with a remarkable effort in recovering the payments of the many defaulting State fares. On the basis of these negative effects, common to several African countries, the Network promoted five principles: fighting the privatization of water in all its forms; ensuring a participatory public control on water resources; opposing

the system of pre-paid water meters (which automatically excluded from the service those who do not have the money to pay a minimum in advance); ensuring that the right to water was a constitutionally acknowledged principle; ensuring that management and water distribution was entrusted solely to the public sector. In June 2008, in an open letter the Chairman of the African Union (UA), a large group of movements and African NGOs, including again NCAP, denounced the choice of privatization and asked the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) to strengthen and modernize the public service. The most tangible result of NCAP remains, however, the one achieved in 2011, when the Campaign put pressure on the government of Ghana to oppose the renewal of the management contract with the multinational AVR L, due to expire at the end of 2011. So the water finally returned to be managed by the State and thus under public sector's control, option that has not been changed until today. More recently, in February 2014, the NCAP mobilized again after years of inactivity both to force the GWCL to suspend the introduction of the so-called pre-paid water meter, i.e. a prepaid card to be recharged from time to time to buy water, and to draw back the public attention on the proposals of the international financial institutions. As part of the "pay-as-you-use" system (pay as much as you consume), the government had proposed to introduce the mechanism "the more you drink, the more you'll be charged" to deal with the robberies of water and then respond to the problem of non-revenue and unpaid water. However, ten years earlier, Ghana had already adopted a similar prepaid system to electricity, with very disappointing results. In fact, not only the per capita cost of electricity raised to around 80 cedis per week (the equivalent of 20 Euros) but also most of the devices were defective, causing leakage and energy waste. Moreover, the "prepaid" system for water does not solve the fundamental issue of the access, denying the consumption to those who can not buy it, that is to say the poorest population groups. Despite the won battles and the large

50 %
of the population lived
with less than a dollar per day

35 %
did not have any access
to drinking water

15 %
the average percentage of
the salary used to pay water
bills in Ghana

A Country in water crisis

scale mobilization both on a national and international level, the NCAP still goes through a dormant stage with regard to the ability of implementing the public management model today in force. This is due to several reasons, one of which is the lack of funds. Since this is in fact a self-financed movement, the Campaign can not rely on the constant commitment of the partner organizations nor on a structured and permanent leadership. This factor must be added both to the decreasing mobilization of the Civil society, which does not perceive the privatization of water as a genuine threat any longer, and the loss of all connections among the African movements involved in countering the processes of privatization of the management of water resources and the phenomena land and water grabbing. Unlike the Water Networks that keep operating in Latin America and Asia, in Africa the networks that were still operational until 2011 have now disappeared. Also the connections with the European Water Movements have faded out, while the mobilizations of the major social movements have been focusing on a very diverse range of claims and complaints related to the processes

of liberalization of trade services and investments. This gap was filled by the African Social Forum promoted by Senegalese movements, which took place in Dakar from 15 to 19 October 2014 and which allowed different social movements, in particular those of the French-speaking area, not only to meet and exchange experiences but also to focus on the peculiar difficulties met in the mobilisation battles.

The session devoted to water and health services organized by the Italian NGO COSPE (Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries) and by the Italian Committee for the World Water Contract (CICMA) provided a context for the convergence of analysis and critical issues among the main networks and organizations of African farmers engaged in fighting water and land grabbing. During these three days of debate and discussion, COSPE took charge of facilitating the participation of the representatives of Water movements from Ghana, Swaziland, Central African Republic and other Countries, thus preparing the background to reactivate a mobilization at the level of African movements.

The contribution of COSPE and CICMA was to provide an update on the critical issues resulting from the European Commission's and multinational water companies' orientations and to help understand the urgency of a mobilization in defence of water made up by peasant movements and citizens, in order to counter a threat to all the Common goods: the grabbing water and land by privates and speculative finance. The result was a declaration on the "Right to Water and to the Land", which was submitted at the Final Assembly of the African Forum on October 19 and obtained the endorsement of 30 organizations and movements from more than 10 African countries.

Then the commitment was made to set up continental platforms of mobilization that, on the basis of a common agenda, engage to struggle the international agreements aimed at accelerating the processes of grabbing common goods, and claim the inclusion of these rights in the new post-2015 agenda for a sustainable development.



BEYIN, GHANA

Photo by Barbara Menin

1.4

Between commercialization and right

"Even today, 3.5 millions of people in Ghana do not have access to drinking water. In rural areas, the lack of access to clean water is 20%. The **87% of the population (more than 21 millions of people) have no access to adequate sanitation services**". These are the not so reassuring figures provided by Ibrahim Musah, policy responsible for the NGO WaterAid in Ghana. Puzzling figures, especially for a country ranked as middle-income, which says a lot both on the level of redistribution of wealth and on the criteria of identification used by the World Bank and other United Nations agencies when it is claimed that the Millennium goal of halving the world population who does not have access to water has been reached. Despite the strenuous struggles of the national Campaign against the privatization of water and the following restoration of the urban services in public hands, the water and health crisis in the country speaks out and the State of Ghana considers water a "national security issue" more than a Common good to defend. Inefficiency lays in the first place in the fragmentation of the water and sanitation system, son of the reforms of the 90s and split into urban and rural areas, and secondly in the lack of financial resources at the districts level. Alongside GWCL, the parastatal society operating now as a monopoly in the supply and distribution of urban water, the public agency CWSA deals with water and sanitation services supply in rural communities and in small towns. The latter plays a supportive role in the district assemblies who directly manage water and sanitation facilities

"We need a policy with a human face on water, since neoliberal policies do not work."

Patricia Blankson, Network for Women's rights, Accra

52 MILIONI DI \$
the money spent each year
for water and sanitation.
Of these, only 3.5% comes
from public finances

2,5 %
of incomes from public
health, if invested in water
and basic sanitation, would
be sufficient to mitigate the
problem

Foreign Dependence

in the districts, in communities and in small rural units. However the six-monthly and annual meetings between the GWLC and CWSA executives in the occasion of the World Water Day on March 22 are not able to ensure nor a good level of communication between the two bodies nor the redistribution of water resources between rich and poor areas. In addition, as it has been outlined many times already, one of the biggest problems when we talk about water supply are the dilapidated infrastructures, which demands a resolute and vigorous public response in terms of investments in capital costs and up-to-date and functioning equipment.

The percentage of non-revenue water, resulting mainly by losses, is estimated around 45% of the total volume of distributed water. This means that only a half of the water pumped from the central system is actually consumed by Ghanaians. The rest is lost in the transmission. However, a superficial analysis of the government charges the losses to the "water robbery" and suggests to apply a stricter legislation that would make the "thieves" criminally liable under the law. Another signal of political short-sightedness and the lack of a national policy on water is the amount of the investments in water and public hygiene. According to WaterAid Ghana's official estimates, Ghanaian government has spent on average only

0.34% of its GDP for the water sector and sanitation services between 2008 and 2011.

Ghana is in fact heavily dependent on international donors' funds. Out of 52 millions of dollars per year spent on water and hygiene, only 3.5% (1.8 million) comes from public finances. The rest comes from the funds granted by the international and multilateral organizations present in the Country. These include the World Bank, the Chinese Bank for Investments, the EU (with an amount of 16 millions of Euros in aids for development in 2013), the African Development Bank (AFDB), the International Agency for Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) and the Danish International Agency for Development (DANIDA), to name some. The massive presence of capitals and foreign investments for development **made the government even less responsible and heavily dependent on the logic of the external aid.** Yet, according to Mohamed, a former NCAP activist, it would not take much to get out of what he calls the "neo-colonialism trap". If, in fact, only 2.5% of the incomes coming from public health were reinvested in the water sector, a minimum of water for nutrition and sanitation services could be guaranteed for all, enabling the coverage of the costs and then the realization of the human right stated in the UN resolution. Making a careful review of the domestic spending

(i.e. through a prudent redistribution of public spending) the Ghana could be able to be less dependent both on foreign aid and on conditions that multilateral donors require. In fact, even if the water sector is currently managed by parastatal bodies, that is to say controlled by the State, the vision and the management model is the internationally predominant one, set by the World Water Forum and multinational companies, ie a economic management based on the principle of full recovery cost, the total recovery cost, including the remuneration of capital and thus the Automatic Tariff Adjustment. This makes water a commodity whose price rises and falls depending on the whims of currency and international markets. A public good, a service that not everybody can afford and that is not envisaged nor guaranteed in a minimal amount, i.e. the right to live a decent life. Alongside a growing awareness of the urgency to provide the Country with a legislative framework that constitutionalised water as a human right, accepted by many civil society organizations as a valid and viable solution to counter the water grabbing process and the resignation of the Nation States' sovereignty, **Ghana should enhance some managerial experiences** that are practiced in some of its regions and restore the ownership and management of water to its own communities. One of these "virtuous" management experiences is the successful experiment of public-

community partnership realized in the small town of Savelugu thanks to the collaboration of GWCL and the direct involvement of the local community that takes part in the making of tariff prices (covering the costs of the supply and the maintenance of the infrastructure) and ensures the access to drinking water in that village according to principles of solidarity and collective responsibility. As far as water management is concerned, four years after the restoring of the public management of water, Ghana is today at a crossroads: accepting the new conditions imposed by the IMF to the detriment of its sovereignty or as an alternative adopting a national plan for the management of its own water resources, which implies the investment of national resources.

If the choice would be oriented toward the public management of water, Ghana should implement a model of participatory and responsible management at national level but also widespread in the territories. This model should be able to involve the local communities in participatory projects for local water management, in accordance with a vision and culture of water as common good, with respect for the principle of subsidiarity and inclusive collective responsibility and above all to initiate policies against the processes of water and land grabbing. The fact that Africa is increasingly becoming a land to be conquered and for grabs of its natural

resources by multinational companies is more and more acknowledged in the rural communities that assist to the expropriation of land and water. This awareness has strongly emerged during the sessions of the recent African Social Forum held in Dakar from 15th to 19th October, 2014. Would it be possible to revive in Ghana that spirit of mobilization and participation to compel the national political class to counter the conditions that European Union, the United States and the "Asian tigers" are trying to impose on the developing countries of the African continent through new multilateral and bilateral trade agreements now in phase of negotiation? If the political choice should fall on a public water management, Ghana should implement a model of participatory and responsible management at national level but also widespread in the territories.

This model should be able to involve the local communities in participatory projects for local water management, in accordance with a vision and culture of water as common good, with respect for the principle of subsidiarity and inclusive collective responsibility.

The erosion of the right to water is a global phenomenon that is manifested in various forms. The Water grabbing, that is to say the expropriation of the right to water, together with the acquisition of the land, constitutes a violation of the human, economic and social rights of the individuals and communities.



BEYIN, GHANA

Photo by Fabrizio Sbrana

AFRICA AND EUROPE, DANGEROUS LIAISONS

edited by Silvia Cardascia

2.1

"The international trade between my country and Western countries is like what happens when a giraffe and an antelope try to eat a fruit of the same tree. You may make the ground level under their paws equal, but such context can not yet be defined fair."

Rev Dr Aboagye-Mensah, Christian Council of Ghana

Partnership between Africa and Europe

Traditionally one of the areas at the centre of the trade policies but also relations of development cooperation of the European Union, which evolved alongside the processes of strengthening of the monetary union and the following coordination of the cooperation policies of the Member countries. Development cooperation has in fact its basis in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty of Rome first and then the Lisbon treaty).

Development policy of the European Union has been drafted gradually: if at the beginning it concerned mostly the countries and overseas territories associated with the Union, today it has been extended, covering all the Developing Countries and representing one of the pillars of the EU external relations together with trade. **The European Union has been and is the main importer of products from "Developing Countries"**, especially Africa, and it is also the major aid donor through policies of cooperation, trade and partnership agreements. These partnerships between Europe and Africa have a significant impact on the policies of the Ghana. We would like to remind the evolution of the policies put in act by the European Commission in regards of the African continent because they help

to understand the critical issues that the African countries will continue to face, especially if they want to reclaim their sovereignty in the direct management of land and water.

The EU is in fact geared to project outside its legislative powers forging its relationships with trade and development policies based on the values expressed by the European Founding Fathers. However, despite the tight link between trade and development, since Doha Development Round (trade round within the World Trade Organization) of 2001, the "benevolent" role aimed to promote the principles of the United Nations Charter has begun to be questioned by a large number of Developing Countries.

Some of the latter denounce in fact that the EU approach is increasingly oriented to ensure the access to the emerging markets and to protect European Single Market from external competition. The proliferation of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with a number of strategic partners such as China, Russia, Japan, India and Brazil, and the partnership agreements made for regional groupings of African Countries unfortunately confirm this approach.

The first phase of the cooperation between Europe and Africa started with the **Treaty of Rome in 1957**, and took the shape of the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) cooperation agreements. The legal regulation of the relations with the former African colonies and the Yaoundé

Convention signed in Lomé between Europe and African countries became the hard core of the relations between the nascent Europe and the infants African States following the process of decolonization.

Initially considered a winning model of North-South cooperation, the **Lomé Convention** was based on four fundamental principles: discrimination, non-reciprocity, partnership and institutionalization. The criterion of "positive discrimination" sanctioned the special relationship and exclusive relationship between the European Community and the ACP Countries. The non-reciprocity was a fundamental feature of the economic cooperation and established a regime of trade preferences: on one hand it allowed the products and raw materials from the ACP countries to enter the European market without customs duties or quantitative restrictions, on the other hand it did not demand any preferential access of the European standards into the ACP markets.

This allowed ACP products not enter into direct competition with European ones that were subject to the Community Common Agricultural Policy (PAC). The principle of "partnership between equals" stated "the right of every State to determine its own political, social, cultural and economic choices". In other terms, it gave each ACP State the right to determine the purpose of the aid received by the Community and the areas of destination. It was finally

created a permanent legal structure through the institutionalization of the ACP Secretariat. With the oil crisis, the world economic recession of the 80s and the fall of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the direction of the European aid flow changes and the ACP countries of the African continent lose their negotiating power and the role of privileged business partners of Europe. With the end of bipolarise, also, the EU adapted to the new global geopolitical chessboards and adopt the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's neoliberal policies, as well as the rules of the game laid down by the new-born World Trade Organization (WTO). In February 2000, the Lomé Convention is replaced by the **Cotonou Agreement**, a twenty-years lasting agreement ratified by all parliaments in 2003. The paradigm shift, compared to Lomé, was incisive and sanctioned the move from the preferential trade system to free trade. The idea, suggested in 1996 by the European Commission's green book, was to establish relations with different regions of Africa and not with a single group and to create areas of free trade, in compliance with Article XXIV of GATT (the agreement that establishes the rules for the formation of customs unions and free trade areas between groups of countries belonging to the WTO). The third phase of development cooperation of Europe takes initiatives with the **Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA)** whose aim is to redesign the socioeconomic relations with the ACP countries divided into regional groupings, eliminating all customs duties and non-tariff barriers on imported and exported goods in the period between 2008 and 2020. The EPA Agreements implied the liberalization of the services, the protection the rights of intellectual property, the definition of new rules on competition and the signing of an agreement for the protection of direct foreign investments. So with the introduction of the EPAs, one of the cornerstone principles of the Lomé agreements,

the non-reciprocity, disappeared. In the EPAs it is about "reciprocal rights and duties", so calling "equal" the trade relationships between symmetric partners, ignoring the obvious inequality and gap between the two continents in terms of development and, as a consequence, volume of trade.

The basic concept was that the liberalization of the trading of goods and services in a favourable framework for business and foreign trade would allow the countries that had benefited of the ACP agreements to enter the assembly of the world economy, fostering growth and development.

The European "Commercial democracy" approach was also confirmed by the transfer of the competence for the EPAs to the Directorate General (DG) for Trade of the Union, thus removing it from the DG Cooperation and Development. With this new page of development cooperation, the European Union strengthened the constraints that had already been imposed on the African countries by structural adjustment plans prepared by the World Bank and IMF starting from the 90s. Such approach did not take long to be criticized not only by the African civil society but also by European one. African Countries have in fact displayed a strong opposition and resistance against the pressure put by the European Commission to conclude the agreements by 2008. The mobilization of European and African

civil society expressed in the "Stop EPA" campaign that started in 2004. Promoted by the "Movement for trade justice" network, the campaign had the participation of many NGOs from UK and Western African States. The main critical issues reported by African governments and civil society, can be summarized as follows. First, the EPAs hinder the existing regional integration initiatives, reducing the trading volume between African countries. In fact the European Commission negotiates the agreements with the different African regional groups involved as separate entities. The second critical issue is related to the reciprocity inherent in the agreements, which results in the cancellation of ACP customs duties and in the liberalization of the market not only for agricultural and industrial products but also for services and direct foreign investments.

The third is the devastating effect of the liberalization of the European agricultural products, encouraged by the subsidies to the export provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that penalizes productions and agricultural activities of the African farmers. Finally, there is the threat that the clauses envisaged in the EPAs on the liberalization of services and foreign direct investments could lead to the opening of the second and third sector to transnational corporations, penalizing the already vulnerable industrial policy of the African countries involved.

BILLBOARD
ACCRA, GHANA
Photo by Sara Miotto





AFRICA-UE: THE AGREEMENTS IN DETAIL

What are the EPAs?

EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) were born as regional, "development-oriented" free-trade agreements that the 79 ACP Countries (48 Sub-Saharan African Countries, 16 Caribbean Countries, 15 Pacific Countries), gathered in 7 regions, engaged to finalize by the 31st December 2007 with EU. However, since at the time of the fixed deadline only the bloc of Caribbean Countries had managed to conclude a complete EPA, the European Commission started to negotiate the so-called IEPAs (interim EPAs): transitional agreements made with single countries or regional subgroups. EPAs aim at liberalizing not only goods trade (by removing duties and non-tariff barriers) but also the service sector. In addition EPAs include the protection of intellectual property rights, the standardization of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the definition of competition rules and the protection of direct investments of foreign companies. The overall liberalization of the market must be realized by 2020.

Why to negotiate the EPAs?

EPAs are commercial instruments intended to replace the "non-reciprocity" system that used to rule trade relations between EU and ACP Countries for over 30 years. The preferential treatment offered by Lomé to ACP Countries was in fact considered inconsistent with WTO rules as it limited itself to "protect" only one group of developing Countries by excluding others. One of the WTO basic pillars is in fact the Most Favorite Nation clause (MFN clause), which establishes that if a Country offers a commercially favorable treatment to another Country, the same treatment must be applied to all other countries according to the non-discrimination principle. An exception to this rule is the so-called Enabling clause, which allows a special treatment for Developing Countries. This dispensation

can be applied only if it is extended to all the Developing Countries without any discrimination. As a consequence, the preferential treatment that EU offered with Lomé Conventions was a trap of a legal fault, as it had been reserved to a restricted group of Developing Countries (ACP countries, indeed).

So the EPAs solution was conceived as a stratagem, as it "takes advantage of" GATT's XXIV article, which establishes the rules for the creation of customs unions and free-trade areas among Countries taking part in the WTO. The Cotonou Agreement fixed the deadline for the entering into force of the EPAs by no later than the 1st January 2008. Because of the length of the process that is made up by 4 steps (negotiation/conclusion, signing up, ratification, entering into force), the facilitations envisaged by Cotonou have been replaced by European Regulation (No 1528/2007), which expired on the 1st October 2014.

Which are the Countries identified by the ACP acronym?

They are 79 Countries of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific. 49 are African Countries, 16 are Caribbean islands, 15 are Pacific islands. 39 out of 49 Least Developed Countries are ACP Countries, most of which are in the African continent.

79

countries defined under the acronym ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific)

39

belong to the group of the Least Developed Countries

The numbers of the EPAs

Which are ACP regions?

They are 7 regions: Western Africa - ECOWAS (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Mauritania); Central Africa - CEMAC (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe); Eastern and Southern Africa - ESA (Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe); Eastern Africa - EAC (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda); Southern Africa - SADC (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland); Caribbean - CARIFORUM (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago); Pacific (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru Federate States, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, American Samoa, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu).

In the map: Western Africa (dark green); Central Africa (pink-orange); Eastern and Southern Africa (red); Eastern Africa (fuchsia); Southern Africa (blue); Caribbean (green); Pacific (yellow).

7 REGIONS

involved: 5 of them are African

49

EPA agreements concluded by EU with the ACP States on 16th October 2014



ACP REGIONS

Which are the actors currently involved?

On 16th October 2014, 28-European Union concluded EPAs with 49 ACP countries, for a total amount of 900 millions of people involved over four continents.

Out of 7 regions, which European Union is currently negotiating with, only the CARIFORUM EPA - EU with the Caribbean bloc has been actually signed and ratified and it has entered into force since March 2009 (when the European Parliament registered the ratification instruments).

In July 2014, EU concluded the negotiation process (which precedes the signature and ratification) with the ECOWAS (Western African States Organization) and the SADC group (Southern African States Organization). European Union concluded also an "interim EPA" with the Central Africa Community (CEMAC), Central and Southern Africa (ESA), and, more recently, with the Eastern Africa Community (EAC). The interim

EPAs, partial agreements aiming at liberalizing the goods market, incorporate the engagement to enlarge the "coverage" even to services, to intellectual property rights and to other sectors of the economy.

The interim EPAs, however, have considerably destabilized the ACP Countries group, that cannot any longer be considered as a whole bloc since they have been adopting different rules. Such a diversity has had a negative influence on the process of regional and continental integration in Africa, since it contributed to create a "multi-speed" Africa.

What is covered by EPAs and which effects are to be expected in terms of development?

Caribbean region is the only one that signed and ratified a complete EPA (CARIFORUM-EPA) in all its sections: goods, services, technical barriers to commerce, facilitation rules, agriculture

and fishing, capitals procurements, competition rules, intellectual property rights and innovation, public contracts, environment.

All other EPAs, concluded or undergoing the stage of negotiation, are born as free trade agreements, but they present a clause (the so called rendez-vous clause), which compels the partners of the agreement to carry on with negotiations concerning the trade-related issues (services, direct foreign investments, etc.).

With reference to market shares, EU undertakes to ensure immediate access to its farming and manufacturing products (fact already envisaged by Lomé Conventions).

The liberalization of ACP goods, however, is going to take place gradually over a time span of 10 to 20 years, while all the agricultural and industrial products considered "critical" for the development of African domestic industries are kept out of the market.

The degree of liberalization of the market varies from 75% of ECOWAS Countries (Western Africa) to 98% of Seychelles.

WATER: HUMAN RIGHT AND COMMON GOOD

edited by Rosario Lembo

3.1

Partnership agreements with Europe

The Republic of Ghana and European Union are bounded by some historical connections in addition to trade exchanges and relations. In 1957, the same year when Ghana obtained the independence (becoming the first State of Sub-Saharan Africa to free from the colonial yoke), Europe founded the European Economic Community. Beyond this historical coincidence, Ghana has a long history of trade relations with the European Union, which dates back to the signing of the first Lomé Convention in 1975. European Union is the most important commercial partner of Ghana. Ghana's exports sales into the European market reached the amount of 3 billion of dollars in 2012, representing 42,9% of the whole export volume. Moreover EU has allocated 323 millions € for the development cooperation over the period 2014-2020.

In December 2007, Ghana has signed an interim EPA with the European Union, which set the rules for the liberalization of the goods market. As a matter of fact, with the expiry of the preference regime in 2007, the Republic of Ghana and the Ivory Coast would have been the only countries of the Western Africa Countries Organization (ECOWAS) that would have undergone the introduction of duties on their own export goods if the agreement with EU had not been signed. In fact the other ECOWAS States, due to their classification as Less Advanced Countries, could benefit from the initiative "Everything But Arms"

"Because of the public-private partnership model, the public sector has turned out in a hollow shell."

Basini, Trade and Development Expert at Third World Network

(EBA), a particular form of preference at the advantage of all the least developed Countries which allows all their export products to be exempted from duties without quantity limits.

More motivated by the threat of the ending of the preferential tariff regime with the EU than by the socio-economical advantages ensured by the agreement, Ghana and Ivory Coast signed two interim EPAs (even if they have not been ratified). At the same time, the European Union and ECOWAS States initiated a regional interim EPA. So in 2007, at the expiry of ACP agreements, there were three agreements undergoing the phase of negotiation with EU: two individual EPAs with Ghana and Ivory Coast and the regional one with the Western African States Organization (ECOWAS). This situation of extreme fragmentation of the system, which determined a 7

3 BILLIONS OF \$

The amount of Ghana's export to Europe

323 BILLIONS OF \$

The financial allocation by the EU in development cooperation initiatives

Numbers are important

years long impasse of the negotiations, was produced by the opposition of Ghanaian civil society and of the other Countries' civil societies. The impasse was overcome thanks to the meeting of the regional EPA EU-ECOWAS, which took place on 10th July 2014 in Accra. Following this meeting and convergence

of the different countries, the signing, ratification and entering into force of the free trade agreement seem increasingly near goals. The agreement establishes the opening of 75% of Ghanaian market to agricultural and industrial European products over an adjustment period that is going to last approximately 20 years. In other words, it means that all the duties and non-tariff barriers to almost all European export goods will be removed. In addition to that, the article 106 of the agreement (the so-called "rendez-vous" clause) establishes that the partners must engage in carrying on the negotiations in order to reach a complete regional agreement for the liberalization of all the following sectors: services, intellectual property rights, designation of geographical origin, movements of capital, personal data protection, direct foreign investments, competition, consumers protection,

75%

The opening share of Ghana's market to Europe following the EPA of 2014

sustainable development, public procurements.

The "rendez-vous" clause binds the partners to agree upon an accurate road map and agenda of the negotiations in the six following months after the conclusion of the agreement.

A clear and immediate message of

dissent has come from the **Economic Justice Network of Ghana** (a network of civil society NGOs), that unambiguously condemned the decision of ECOWAS to approve the signing of the EPA during its 45th regular session of Heads of State and Government held in **Accra on 10th July**. According to the analysis of Third World Network Africa (TWN), one of the organizations of the Economic Justice Network (EJN), this decision clashes not only with Ghanaian civil society's positions, but it goes against the interests of private citizens and small local farmers and entrepreneurs. In addition to not promoting and supporting the development of the African continent, according to the NGO **TWV EPAs have been conceived in order to favor the demands of the Western economies** and they would lead to the collapse of national production and of all manufacturing sectors, due to the competition exercised by the massive admission of European export goods – which are subsidized by the CAP – that would determine a derangement of the already vulnerable African markets. The "rendez-vous" clause in fact pushes forward the deregulation of sectors which were previously not included in the EPAs, so to induce a level of liberalization that goes consistently further the current commercial obligations with WTO.

EU would actually be negotiating with African countries agreements, which imply much more "free market" than it was initially established by the World Trade Organization. This kind of approach represents a double threat for most African Countries.

The first critical point, which is denounced by TWN and by the civil society organizations active in the fight against EPAs, is that this approach reflects the Western's will to weaken Western Africa's governments and policies by undermining development and regional growth of the markets. The entering into force of the trade agreements with EU would in fact strengthen the preferential relations with Europe, so making Western Africa more and more dependent by the export



NATURAL PARK,
GHANA
Photo by Fabrizio Sbrana

of its raw materials and discouraging intra-regional commerce within States and regions of Africa.

African market is indeed extremely fragmented and offers EU a "ready and available playground" where to launch foreign products and services (TWN, July 2014). In fact intra-regional African commerce amounts only to 10% of the total continental commerce (whereas in EU 68% of the exports and 71% of the imports stay at intra-regional level). According to the analysis of TWN, that is not attributable to an inability of African States to seize and make the most of domestic trade initiatives, but to a sum of policies, international and bilateral agreements, which negatively affects the efforts of African regional integration of the markets and circulation of the products.

The challenges that an African country like the Ghana must face are connected to the high level of unemployment, to the inadequate level of productivity and competitiveness, to the vulnerability of raw materials' prices and local currency, to the insufficient investments both in the agricultural sector and infrastructures, but mostly to the raise of poverty. The overcoming of these challenges would require greater efforts by the governments, through public policies aimed at encouraging not only the local productive potentialities and domestic industrialization processes, but also intra-regional African commerce, in order to ensure the

allocation of products, especially the agricultural ones.

The entering into force of EPA agreements is not only unfavorable to the development of the African continent **but it is indeed a renewed attempt to maintain the status quo in the relationship between Europe and its ex-colonies**. This concern makes some experts of the TWN declare: "At the moment we are pessimist".

The second critical point, which is connected to the process of liberalization of goods production but also commercial services in the local markets, is that it is made within the horizon of the USA-EU negotiations, in their phase of conclusion, which are known under the acronym of TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership).

The potential signing of this agreement and the obligations that have already been undersigned with the EPAs by most of the main African regions, risk to make the African continent the "meadow" of the major multinational corporations oriented to the buying up of lands and water resources. It is useful to remind that whereas Asian countries have greater cohesiveness and unity in contrasting or facing the threats of the liberalization agreements fostered by Europe, the African continent, as we have been underlining, is more fragmented and divided in the negotiations with the European Union, as it is well demonstrated by the EPA agreements.

3.2

The Access to goods and basic services in Ghana

The **cancellation** of custom duties on goods that enter in Ghana from Europe, according to the EPA agreements, not only has distorting effects similar to those established by the PAC on agricultural products but above all it has as consequence the reduction of tax revenue for the Country. For a Country as the Ghana, without an effective fiscal system and a welfare policy, this component of revenues represents an important resource. **Fewer revenues for the state budgets translate into less investment in services and social spending**, especially to improve public services. In 2004, Kofi Annan, the former general secretary of United Nations, identified the tariff liberalization as an obstacle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Addressing to African Heads of State he argued that:

KOFI ANNAN

in 2004 Kofi Annan defined the tariff liberalization as an obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

The role of world organisations

"A large source of concern is the effect that trade liberalization shaped by the EPA would have on income tax. Many of your Countries heavily depend on income generated from customs duties for government revenue. The proposed decrease of these revenues,

combined with the fall of prices of raw materials as well as the increasing foreign debt, imposes a heavy burden on your Countries and it threatens to further hinder your ability to achieve the **Millennium Development Goals**. Concerning Ghana, due the high debt of the Country compared to foreign creditors and the rescue plan that the government is negotiating with the IMF (which, however, will require a massive reduction of the public spending and a new wave of liberalization), the margin of action of the State in terms of investment in water and sanitation infrastructure will be increasingly restricted. Therefore, the entry into force of EPA would determine a further deterioration of life of the poor in the access to primary goods such as water, sanitation and healthcare. Another threatening spectre in Ghana is the liberalization of water and sanitation services, boosted by the "rendez-vous" clause listed in EPA agreement and this perspective is destined to become even more hostile in terms of social impact when combined with the effects of the investment agreements and other commercial sectors during the step

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Structural plans of World Bank and IMF determined, since the 2001 results not too positive

of negotiation between the US and Europe. As already widely analysed, the experiment of privatization in urban management of water resources in Ghana, favoured by World Bank and IMF Structural adjustment plans, determined in 2001 results not absolutely positive,

"Hoping for the best, hoping for the West."

Bernard Anada, Policy Analyst di ISODEC

increasing exponentially water prices and worsening the drinking water supply especially among the poorest. While the government is not creating the necessary conditions to reduce endemic poverty and increase the well being of its population, it is also established that the private sector has not been able to do better. There are several cases of Countries and local governments, especially in Latin American Countries, that have stopped or not renewed at multinational companies the licence for private management of water services because of the non-respect of the contractual clauses or the inefficiency of the service provided. Together with the water, a second essential service for a fair life of every community is the access to electricity.

The process of semi-privatization of the electrical power management, initiated by the Ghana Government last July that boosted electricity prices and that has a negative effect also on the price of water bills in the cities. Considering that the urban pumping systems are electric, this constitutes another burdensome front of concern for the Ghanaian civil society. For the reasons outlined above, it is not difficult to imagine the negative social impact that a total transfer to private in the management of the electricity sector could result in terms of price increases and growth in inequalities than in the electricity access and related services, consequently with a worsening in the living conditions of the population. This scenario could realistically materialize, since the liberalization of public services is a constraint required by EPA that Ghana is about to sign.

EPA also means foreign direct investments by "privates" and private investment are considered by EU the oil of the engine to start the growth of emerging Countries, within the "cohesion" logic of development policies and European trade. If it is true that to attract private foreign investment can generate market growth mechanisms,

it is equally true that in the absence of a democratic state, able to redistribute resources with fairness and transparency, the investments simply risk to feed speculation and organized crime networks, exacerbating thus the already intolerable social inequalities, with their train – sadly notorious in Africa - of hunger, epidemics and violent repression. Despite the problems identified, the European Union and the international community seem to sharply veer in the direction of the neoliberal policies, unmindful of the atrocities that they have caused in the not so distant '90s.

Proof of this phenomenon is the numerous multilateral and bilateral international trade treaties that are in

their negotiation phase by the European Union. Not only the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and investment Partnership) between US and European Union, but also the TPP (Trans-Pacific free Trade agreement) between US and Asia and Pacific Countries and the ETA (including USA and Canada). Or even more, the TISA (Trade In Service Agreement), the Agreement in negating phase between EU and a handful of Countries including Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Turkey and USA. Failing to introduce the services sector into TTIP, the TISA resolves the problem, enlarging the goal to all service activities, including public services: this is a measure which is already carried out but failed in 1995 within the

GATT and then WTO agreements. The negotiation of these treaties is carried out in an opaque manner, without any participatory approaches, as denounced by the civil societies worldwide as well as by the Ombudsman of the European Parliament. The risk of a serious democratic deficit is therefore far from imaginary. The outlined agreements and policies presage in fact an international order where the role of politic, civic discussion, parliamentary comparison and representation of the legitimate interests of citizens, are systematically bent - by hook or by crook – to the needs of the International finance and unlimited profit accumulation. To avoid a new wave of fences, for hoarding and greedy exploitation of lands and natural resources of the Earth, now bloodless; to prevent the expropriations that, also to violate human rights, they feed rural depopulation and the explosion of slums around the world; to stop genetic modification of seeds and living species that threaten biodiversity; to prohibit the commodification and financialisation of the life and the increasing control on it exerted by multinational agribusiness, pharmaceutical and commercial corporations; it is urgent that the European Parliament and the different national parliaments oppose to these treaties. To explain in greater detail the consequences connected with the entry into force of these multilateral and bilateral trade treaties, we are allowed to present some possible scenarios that may materialize in Ghana as in many other African Countries as a result of liberalization already introduced through EPAs.

One of the main effects that the TTIP will determine concerning the water issue is to lose every principle of priority: the human one will risk to be subordinated or conditioned by the spread of productive uses eg, power



BEYIN, GHANA
Photo COSPE Archive



PUBLIC TAP CLOSED WITH LOCK, AXIM, GHANA

Photo by Jacopo Gazzola

supply or more profitable activities in terms of revenue / profits both for the State and for individuals. Investments will be channelled on the most destructive models for the ecosystems such as hydraulic crushing and drilling (fracking), as it occurs in states like USA and Canada. No legal barrier could be added to the introduction of GMOs, with an alarming effect on the healthiness of groundwater and the preservation of good quality waters. Another effect determined by TTIP will be the removal or the reduction of the

environmental constraints by individual Countries: the trend will be, as already it is already happening in the United States, not to apply the "precautionary principle". Finally, the definitive application to water and sanitation services of the principle of the full recovery costs for all the productive uses, and therefore not any more just for water intended for human use, will determine significant effects on family farming and food self-production by the rural communities. It seems clear, in the light of these critical issues, that

with the entry into force of TTIP the State Sovereignty is at risk as well as the privatization of public institutions, in addition to the monetization and financialization of the natural water cycle. The risk of privatization of the water management for human use that has already been practised is accompanied by the risk of privatization of the water resources. The ecosystems will become goods, i.e. raw material and industrial product to be manufactured, treated, bought, sold, and delivered from a place to another one.

TTIP

is the Transatlantic Trade and Investments Partnership, in negotiation phase, between the US and EU

TPP

is the Trans-Pacific free trade treaty, a small box

USE PRIORITY

in case of water, the international agreements should prefer productive activity needs than those aimed at human consumption

DRILLING

one of the sectors of investment according to new agreements

GMO

genetically modified organisms crops can easily be introduced and they will have a negative impact on conservation of good quality water

The effects of international agreements

3.3

Self-defence handbook of human rights and common goods

Africa is the "hope of the world", as the Japanese Prime Minister pointed out. The main multinational European companies share this statement. The point is whether this "hope" is the same one of the population, of the African citizens, or whether it benefits solely the financial markets.

Today Africa is turning more and more into a land of conquest for big companies, markets, multinational companies and international financial organizations. The pursuance of these processes by the extension and the negotiation of partnership and trade agreements is the reason to harbour the "Hope of the West."

Today the African continent is already characterized by the most significant phenomena of earth, water, food and natural resources appropriation, in quantitative terms. Those expropriations aim to maintain the level of welfare of a third of the world population. More than 20% of the African lands has become the property of the Sovereign Wealth Funds or Investment Funds.

On the basis of these data, it is not possible to believe that the empowering process for the "hopes" of African people may come from the ratification of new partnership agreements between single African Countries and the European Commission, or with Europe as a whole. Water represents as usual the thermometer of the

"Africa represents today the hope of the world."

Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

lack of coherence in the partnership policies pursued by Commission. The European Environmental Agenda, apparently aimed to achieve a "good ecological status for water by 2027" at a Member States level, in fact aims to re-launch the liberalization of water and all the public services related to the ecosystem and this model will be applied not only to European countries but also to African ones.

Economic growth and reduction of poverty, goals that the Commission has recognized as a priority and to be achieved by 2030, are in fact canalised in the promotion of the so-called Green Economy, i.e. private investments, while delegating the definition of the rules for the use of Mother Earth's resources to a governance model based on "the delegation to stakeholders", with consequent reduction of the States' sovereignty. Before these rather critical

scenarios that present on the horizon of the next 15-20 years, and that actually cancel any "hope" for African citizens, it is important now that civil and social movements of the African Countries start to organize and mobilize against their Governments and Parliaments to force them to speak out publicly about the partnership proposals and models of cooperation that Europe, USA and donors countries propose.

The awareness of these critical issues demands that African civil society and social movements may be able to cope with some challenges. The first is to assume that the cooperation policies implemented by European Union and major financial agencies have not been and still are not functional to the achievement nor of Millennium Goals nor to a reduction in the number of people without access to water, food, land, and feeding.



AXIM, GHANA

Photo by Fabrizio Sbrana

Financial flows, transferred through projects and funds in support of partnership agreements, are often conditioned and are not aimed at the promotion of a sustainable development, at the safeguard of human rights and preservation of resources. Cooperation policies have in fact encouraged the exploitation of the available natural resources and the expansion of European markets and companies.

This lacking of coherence shows with greater evidence in the African countries, that are a traditional and privileged reference area for the European cooperation policy, as it is testified by the EPAs.

The European policies in international cooperation towards the African continent, as it has been underlined in the historical reconstruction of the different phases, have ranged from the classical approach of the emergency aid to the new orientation based on the nexus "commerce-development", which was inaugurated by the **Cotonou agreements**.

If African civil society is not able to become conscious of these critical points, it is impossible to think about reducing the migration flows from countryside to the towns or towards other Countries, as well as activating processes intended to prevent the regional conflicts connected to the access and control of resources, by ensuring the survival of family agriculture. If this awareness would still be lacking, it would not be possible to implement actions contrasting the new commercial policies which indirectly promote the phenomena of land and water grabbing, in addition to the commercialization and financialization of Mother Earth's resources and common goods.

The second challenge which civil society has to face is **to be able to overcome the fragmentation of the mobilizations, activisms and single sector demands**. It is about being able to develop "alternatives" to the economic growth and development

GOAL ONE

obtain a UN "Agenda" for those Countries where the guarantee of basic rights is consecrated as priority objective

The international movements goal

models based on the exploitation of resources, which is the Bible of what is nowadays proposed by Europe, United States and by fast industrializing Asian Countries or Brazil, India and China.

It is crucial to redefine and put into practice new models of cooperation and partnership among social movements, specially those who are committed in the defense of common goods, in the claim of universal human rights as the right to food, health, education, and in the fight to the trend brought about by the international speculative finance which is trying to grab the natural resources to be found in the subsoil of Ghana, Congo, Mali, Guinea and most African Countries. So the goal is to build a unified platform to counteract the natural resources grabbing policies, but above all to initiate a process of human rights demand and defense, starting with the basic rights connected with human dignity. In this perspective, **the first unitary goal** must be obtaining the approval from the United Nations Assembly of an Agenda in which such basic rights as the right to water, to food, to health and education are consecrated as the priority goals which the States and the international community must ensure. Still to date, in the draft arranged by the States the concept of "right" has been deleted and replaced by more general statements about access promotion.

The second goal of the mobilization is to obtain, on one hand, the approval from the States of national legislative frameworks and, on the other hand, to get international law instruments and

GOAL TWO

obtain the approval of national legislative frameworks and transfer tools on International Law and binding protocols

binding protocols accepted to be able to guarantee the enforcement of the actualization of basic human rights in formal terms by the States, but also the prosecution of the violations suffered by single persons and communities.

The mobilization platform which baptized the alliance among the Movements engaged in fighting land and water grabbing, signed in Dakar by over 40 associations, stands as a first significant message who is going to test the African civil society's ability and will to oppose to the economic partnerships proposed by the European Commission. Among them there are also Ghanaian movements and NGOs like ISODEC and therefore it is possible to verify which mobilization processes these actors will be able to raise to claim national policies of recognition in the Constitution and implementation of right to water, health services and the safeguard of water resources and ecosystems.

Alliances that would be achieved on the international level, on sharing and building the Dakar platform together with other international civil society movements, will have another occasion to be monitored and verified about the results that they have been reaching in September 2015, when the new Agenda of the post-2015 sustainable objectives is going to be approved.

If this mobilization will take place, it can be argued that this process represents the first real hope that African civil society will have been able to obtain. In order to make this dream come true mobilization is required by everybody.





COSPE

COSPE is a private, secular, nonprofit association. Since its birth, in 1983, it works in the South of the world, in Italy and in Europe for the inter-cultural dialogue, fair and sustainable development, human rights, peace and justice among peoples. Nowadays, COSPE is engaged in the carrying out of 150 projects in 30 different Countries.

COSPE has been present in Ghana, particularly in the Nzema area of the Western Region, since 1999 with projects in different sectors, such as ecotourism and enhancement of cultural traditions, creation of job opportunities, support to micro-enterprise in crafts and agri-food services, co-management of waste and water resources. Specially in the area of Axim a waste collection system was finally experimented with citizens and local authorities. Since 2012 these actions

have been extended to the whole Nzema area to strengthen the management of water resources and hygienic services provided to citizens, in order to improve water quality and monitoring but also to encourage the population to take an active part in local policies.

On a small scale, the project carries out participatory local development activities and water quality and hygienic services monitoring systems, aiming at actually working out a participatory planning and management of the service; moreover it has the purpose of raising awareness about the access to water and hygienic services as a Human right, as it is has been ratified by UN, by means of national and community forums, in collaboration with the local partner ISODEC and National Coalition against the privatization of the Water (NCAP).

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