

Africans investing in Africa, a fresh look at philanthropy

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What is our role, as African citizens, in educating people in Europe and challenging the dominant narratives that are often imposed on us? We must actively engage in the work of reshaping narratives and shifting mindsets. While changing deeply held perceptions takes time, the investment of energy and persistence is worthwhile.

In reimagining African philanthropy, we must ask: how can we begin to centre Africa and its wealth from a different perspective? This shift requires not only external advocacy but also an internal reckoning and recognising and valuing the knowledge we hold within ourselves. Part of this involves acknowledging that those often seen as victims also hold power. I believe that power that is frequently underestimated. Changing how we view ourselves and how we are viewed by others will be a gradual process, but one we must prepare for and commit to.

It's important to note that many of the stereotypes about Africa do not emerge from thin air. Some contain a sliver of truth, perhaps 30%, but the remaining 70% tells a very different story, one that is often overlooked or ignored. Our challenge and goal should be to highlight and amplify that 70%: the richness, complexity, and capability of the continent.

This moment offers a critical opportunity to reset Africa–Europe relations in a way that benefits all parties. African nations have been addressing their own challenges, albeit imperfectly, but with innovation and resilience—there is valuable knowledge here that Europe could learn from. The potential for mutual exchange is significant.

Of course, this reset will not be without its challenges. Financial power remains concentrated in Europe, and there is still a tendency to frame the relationship through the lens of African aid and dependency. This is precisely why I find the idea

of catalysing funding from within Africa so exciting. How can we unlock and mobilise African resources to shift these dynamics?

From a philanthropy standpoint, much of the giving that occurs on the continent is already driven by African philanthropists. We should explore how to deepen and expand this existing ecosystem. Equally important is the exchange of knowledge—learning from how things have been done successfully in Europe, while also recognising the innovations and practices within Africa that deserve emulation. Mutual learning is the foundation for more equitable partnerships.

In a world currently facing significant global crises, and Africa–Europe ties must not only be maintained but reimaged with intentionality.

Finally, any future relationship must address historical imbalances. Africa–Europe relations have long been unequal and have, in many ways, disadvantaged Africa. If we are to move forward, we must acknowledge the legacy of the past and its continued impact on the continent. Any true partnership requires honesty, redress, and a shared commitment to change.

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