

# Globalisation and Popular Resistance

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## *Local Perspectives on Globalisation: The African Case*

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## *Contradictory Perspectives on Globalisation*

### **The Phenomenon**

It has been said often enough that globalisation is creating a global village or that we are living in the era of 'global interdependency' or 'a global neighbourhood' (see Commission of Global Governance, 1995). This is meant to convey the message that national boundaries are breaking down as goods, services, finance, culture, ideologies and messages stream across boundaries invading every nook and cranny of the globe, flattening down diversity and idiosyncrasies in the process. Distances are being shrunk as time gets computed in split seconds. It is said that the very location of thinking, conceptualising, acting and changing has shifted from nation-societies to the globe itself. The concept of space, say the pundits, is neither geographical nor social and much less national; rather it is cyberspace. In other words, to paraphrase Marx, time is annihilating space (Marx, 1973: p524).

One writer summarises the phenomenon of globalisation as follows:

*“As the term is understood here, then globalisation refers to the emergence and spread of a supra-territorial, trans-world dimension of social relations. In institutional terms, the process has unfolded through the proliferation and growth of the so-called ‘trans-national’ corporations, popular associations and regulatory agencies (sometimes alternatively called global companies, global civil society and global regimes, respectively). Ecologically, globalisation has taken place in the shape of planetary climate change, atmospheric ozone depletion, worldwide epidemics and the decline in the Earth’s biodiversity, amongst other things. Economically, in what Karl Marx anticipated as capital’s ‘annihilation of space by time’ (1857-8: p524), globality has been realised inter alia in twenty-four hour round-the-world financial markets, trans-world production lines and a host of global consumption articles. Normatively, globalisation has occurred through the expansion of worldwide standards (e.g. common scales of measurement and so-called universal human rights) as well as through networks of collective solidarity that spans multiple countries (e.g. amongst women, the disabled or indigenous peoples). Psychologically, globalisation has developed through growing consciousness of the world as a single space, awareness reinforced by everyday experiences of diet, music and dress, as well as photographs from outer space showing planet Earth as one location. In these various ways, the rise of supra-territoriality has been comprehensive, in some form and to some degree spanning all aspects of social relations”.* (Scholte, 1998: pp3-4).

### **The dominant discourse**

The dominant discourse on globalisation is essentially celebratory. By and large, although perhaps dressed in new garb, the broad theoretical and ideological framework and underpinnings are neo-liberal. Spearheaded by mainstream economists, its analytical categories are all too familiar – free market, efficiency, economic rationality, comparative advantage, growth, etc. The site of its analysis is microeconomic and its epistemology is grounded in ahistorical empiricism of the statistical kind. Its research is focused on policy *i.e.* prescriptive as opposed to academic or critical (diagnostic) which it often derides.

The central element of this discourse in Africa has been the state-market polarity or dichotomy. Abstracted from its historical concreteness, the ideal type of both the state and the market and their relationship are seen as those in Europe and North America. As argument has it, the best and most efficient allocation of resources is the invisible hand of the market while the state has the function (functionalist paradigm) of creating an enabling environment and playing its ‘*traditional*’ role of maintaining law and order. By ‘*traditional*’ is meant what is supposed to have happened in the developed Northeast. Once this is subjected to history, however, the traditional role attributed to the state turns out to be an ideological make-believe as the state has always played a very central and interventionist role in the process of capitalist accumulation worldwide (Baran, 1957) and is doing so now on the global level in the interest of its own trans-nationals as witnessed, for example, in the policies pursued by the United States and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries in such world forums as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), etc. (see Third World Network, *Third World Resurgence*, various issues).

The institutional home of many of the leading spokespersons of this discourse are the employees and consultants of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO triad. In Africa, the manifestation of the discourse is even more programmatic, and prescriptive rather than theoretical. A significant number of African economists who matter are hired to operationalise the liberalisation/marketisation/privatisation policies and de-statization of their countries economies taking the form of structural adjustment programmes whether '*imported*' or '*home-grown*', meaning locally assembled. (see Lipumba et al., 1984; World Bank, 1994; Gibbon, ed., 1993; Gibbon, ed., 1995). If such consultants indulge in academic discourse at all it is celebratory or eclectically critical at best (see, for instance, Msambichaka et.al., 1994).

The furthest the '*critical*' perspective within the dominant discourse goes is to argue that globalisation is inevitable and here to stay; that it offers '*opportunities and challenges*' and that African policy-makers should make every effort to find a niche in the process (1998 NAM Declaration, see also South Commission, 1990). The choice is not so much between globalisation and no-globalisation but rather to be globalised or to globalise. In other words, in ideological terms, blatant neo-liberalism is given a social democratic face where the free market is tempered with what Karlsson calls the '*social market*' (1997) (whatever that means in conceptual and practical terms) and structural adjustment is given a human face by creating social safety valves.

The issue, however, remains that eclectic softening of prescriptions derived from the basic paradigms of neo-liberalism and the devastating results of the reach of global capitalism does not even scratch the surface of the real issues embedded in the political economy of the new forms (perhaps new stage?) of capitalism and imperialism represented by globalisation. The discourse remains imprisoned within the strongly ideological paradigms and categories of neo-liberalism or pragmatic prescriptions of the '*if-you-can't-beat-it-join-it-type*' (Furedi, 1993).

I now turn to more critical perspectives on globalisation

### **Critical perspectives**

Critical perspectives on globalisation, particularly in the South, may be classified between those which are explicitly political and constructed around the ideologies of resistance and those which are of a more scholarly kind with their genesis in the theoretical frameworks of neo-Marxism or neo-dependencia. The common theme of the critical discourse is to demonstrate the extreme polarisation, inequalities and inequities generated by the so-called process of globalisation on the one hand, and the ruinous effect it has on the livelihoods, environment and ecology of the planet, on the other (see, for example, Brecher & Costello, 1994; Korten, 1995; *Third World Resurgence*, various issues). Demonstrating the extreme income inequality at the global level by a graph in the shape of a champagne glass, Korten computes the

*“20 percent of the world’s people who live in the world’s wealthiest countries receive 82.7 percent of the world’s income; only 1.4 percent of*

*the world's income goes to 20 percent who live in the world's poorest countries."*

(Korten, *ibid*: p106)

In a word, these critical perspectives argue that the single central element of the process of globalisation is the globalising of poverty and the concentration of wealth, power and control over production and communication in the hands of a few hundred giant corporations (see Kim, 1997) and now, one must add global financial speculators in the image of George Soros.

### ***Radical political economy approaches***

The approaches and perspectives within this larger framework may differ in their nuances and details but some of their salient points may be summarised in the outline as follows:

1. Globalisation is seen as part of the worldwide historical process of expansion of capital or the process of accumulation on a world scale (Amin, 1995; Toussaint, 1998) destroying national and local spaces as sites of accumulation and reconstructing societies. Marx himself foresaw this although he could not have even dreamt of electronic finance involving trillions of dollars every day. *'Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it.'* (Marx, 1973: p524).
2. The central form of capital in the current process of this trend called globalisation is the tyranny of finance capital, which has taken a particular form in worldwide financial markets or electronic finance. This is a new form compared to the rise of the finance capital as analysed by Hobson and Lenin.
3. Globalisation has immensely accentuated the extreme polarisation inherent in the process of capital accumulation worldwide, resulting in the concentration of capital on the one hand and poverty on the other. Under globalisation this is not simply a process of proletarianization or peasantization as under classical capitalism but that of marginalization which throws out millions from any productive activity or exertion of labour power in any form. It creates not only the reserve army of adults and children, but what Marcos calls, *'disposable population'* of street children and totally unemployed human wreckages (Marcos, 1997; Becher & Costello, 1994).
4. Globalisation further accentuates the processes of concentration and centralisation of capital in very few corporations and people on a global level, who are not bounded by geographical, national and social spaces or jurisdictions, and who control production, exchange and distribution at the touch of a computer key. This is very well illustrated by the new rules or regimes (TRIPs, TRIMs, MAI, E-commerce, etc.) that the hegemonic states and corporations of the United States and Western Europe have managed, and are continuing to incorporate in WTO agreements (see various issues of *Third World Resurgence*).

5. The social polarisation of classes on a world level goes hand-in-hand with the fusion of social and political power and the obliteration of the distinction between corporate and state structures and institutions: a global military-industrial-financial complex.
6. Globalisation fuses and begins to obliterate the distinctions between speculative and productive capital on the one hand, and 'illegal' and legal capital on the other hand, as small states starved of capital encourage offshore money laundering which in turns is converted into legal capital through over ground banks.
7. Globalisation gives the triad of highly undemocratic world financial institutions, the World Bank, IMF and WTO unprecedented powers reminiscent of the conquering and plundering states of the earlier centuries.
8. These writers posit varied processes as opposing the tendencies inherent in globalisation such as (a) a polycentric world (Amin, 1995); (b) globalisation from below (Brecher & Castillo, 1994); (c) popular and social struggles across national boundaries.

One more recent articulation, which presents globalisation as a new form of militarization and conquest of territories reminiscent of the old conquests of the Third World, deserves some mention. It crystallises the premises postulated above in a graphic language, albeit somewhat over dramatized.

### **Globalisation as militarisation**

Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Mexico) argues that '*Modern globalisation, neo-liberalism as a global system, should be understood as a new war of conquest for territories.*' (Marcos, 1997: p1). The end of the *Cold War*, or the Third World War, as Marcos calls it, did not mean the end of war. As a matter of fact, the end of the Cold War signified the beginning of a new war, World War IV. '*This required, as do all wars, a redefinition of national states, the world order returned to the old epochs of the conquests of America, Africa and Oceania.*' And in the process the national state was reduced to a '*department of a neo-liberal mega-company*' (*ibid*, p4). Figures showing sales of large corporations exceeding the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many a small country are now common place. '*General Motors 1992 sales revenues (USD 133 billion) roughly equalled the combined GDP of Tanzania, Ethiopia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Zaire, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Pakistan. Five hundred and fifty million people inhabit these countries, a tenth of the world's population.*' (Korten, 1999: pp220-21).

In his militarist imagery, Marcos observes that at the end of the Cold War capitalism produced the marvel of the neutron bomb whose *virtue* is that it only destroys life while leaving buildings in tact. '*But a new bellicose marvel would be discovered at the same time as the birth of the Fourth World War: the financial bomb.*' (*ibid*, p4) The recent crash of some East Asian countries no doubt illustrates the power of the financial bomb and this was, perhaps, only a dress rehearsal.

In neo-liberalism, Marcos posits, the state is reduced to the bare minimum:

*'In the cabaret of globalisation, the state shows itself as a table dancer that strips off everything until it is left with only the minimum indispensable garments: the repressive force. With its material base destroyed, its possibilities of sovereignty annulled, its political classes blurred, nation states become, more or less rapidly, a security apparatus for the mega-corporations that neo-liberalism builds in the development of this Fourth World War.'* (ibid, p15).

As a matter of fact, Marcos chips in, even the monopoly of violence, the traditional characteristic of the state, is put on sale by the modern market spurned by globalisation.

The global jigsaw puzzle, in the imagery employed by Marcos, is summarised thus:

*'The first is the double accumulation, of wealth and poverty, at the two poles of global society. The other is the total exploitation of the totality of the world. The third is the migrant part of humanity. The fourth is the nauseating relationship between crime and power. The fifth is the violence of the state. The sixth is the mystery of mega-politics. The seventh is the multi-forms of pockets of resistance of humanity against neo-liberalism.'*

It is the *'pockets of resistance.....of all sizes, of all colours, of the most varied forms'* which we turn to in our next section.

## **State-Civil society-community or pockets of resistance**

*The empire of financial pockets confronts the rebellion of the pockets of resistance.*

Subcomandante Marcos

### **The problematic of civil society**

The concept of civil society came into vogue in the 1980s with the impending collapse of the Soviet and East European systems and the democratisation drive in Africa (White, 1994). In Eastern Europe, following the collapse of bureaucratic socialist regimes (or actually *existing socialism*, as they were then christened), the construction of civil societies was seen as returning to *'normal society on the Western model'*, as the editors of the Journal of Democracy would see it (Journal of Democracy, January 1996: *Civil Society after Communism*, p11) In Eastern Europe itself, the term has been used in as many different ways as contexts (see *ibid*, p18, exchange between President Havel and Prime Minister Klaus of the Czech Republic).

The discourse on civil society in Africa too has used the terms with all kinds of meanings from associational connotations (*civil societies*) to all virtuous, harmonious social space (see, for instance, the International Peace Academy Publication *Civil Society and Conflict Management in Africa*, 1996). It is probably the US based Africanists, whose earlier modernisation constructs had been shattered by dependencia-underdevelopment theorists, that took to the term with a vengeance (see

Mamdani 1990 & 1995). Abstracted from European history itself where the concept was first generated, and from actually existing struggles in Africa to which it was being applied, the term civil society in the Africanist hands became a sterile state-civil society bi-polarity (Mamdani 1990 & 1995, *ibid*).

Again, not unusually within Africa and among African scholars, the civil society political science discourse has tended to revolve around the state-society bi-polarity constructed as it is in the image, and under the influence, of American political science. However, it has had one interesting *home-grown* twist and that is using the term to signify autonomy and freedom of associational life, that is, autonomous of state institutions. Thus the argument for the construction of civil society, at least in the first phases of democratisation, was overwhelmingly constructed around the freedom to form autonomous organisations – associations, people’s organisations, mass organisations like trade unions, etc. (Shivji, 1984; Shivji, ed, 1986; Kiondo, 1993; Gyimah-Boadi, 1996).

Within this as well there were two perspectives and contradictory currents. In the more radical current freedom to organise, while being a reaction to statism of the previous decades, was also seen as a site of social struggles. In the more conventional current, however, the perspective veered towards more institutional and managerial dimensions. These contradictory perspectives perhaps bring out a fundamental epistemological and methodological difference on the state-society dichotomy and which, indeed, in my view, is one of the basic theoretical flaws of the Africanist conceptualisation of the state-society paradigm.

Analysed historically, the concept of civil society in European history represented the transition from medieval feudalist to capitalist society. In that context civil society was, both for Hegel and Marx (and even perhaps Weber), for example, an ensemble of free, equal, abstract individuals associating in the public sphere of production as opposed to the private sphere of the family. For Marx, therefore, civil society was synonymous with bourgeois society. The concept is developed in opposition to feudal relations where the public and the private are merged and statuses are determined by birth and privileges, where politics is direct ‘*that is to say, the elements of civil life, for example, property, or the family, or the mode of labour, were raised to the level of political life in the form of seigniority, estates, and corporations.*’ (quoted in Sayers, 1991: p75).

At the same time for Marx (and this is directly relevant to our conceptual debate on civil society), whereas civil society presents itself as an ensemble of free individuals and as a separate sphere from the state/politics, it is, as a matter of fact, the soil from which arises, and in which is embedded, state power. Two things must be noted from this:

(a) That the individualism and freedom associated with that in civil society are abstracted beings; that once the *social being* of the individuals is examined it becomes clear that civil society is neither homogenous nor free but rather an ensemble of contradictory social relations.

(b) That there is no wall between the state and the civil society because social power is the harbinger of, and in turn is secured by, political power, the state.

In short, the state-civil society discourse, abstracted from European history on the one hand, and actually existing social and political struggles in Africa on the other, gives us a singularly flawed conceptual framework which in turn generates, at best, an irrelevant research agenda and takes us even further from understanding the reality of how history is made and who makes it.

### **Pockets and forms of resistance**

It is important to keep the conceptual flaws discussed in the last section in mind so as to appreciate a number of other bi-polarities in this discourse and their implications for our work. For example, the concept of *civil society* is often presented in contrast to *traditional* society, which polarisation in turn leads to many modernisation prescriptions with little relevance to historically constituted *traditional* societies.

But even more important is the political diagnosis which results from such bi-polarities. On the one hand, the resistance and struggles of the people are not recognised because they do not take the form of modern struggles of civil society (*e.g.* trade unions, chamber of commerce, non-governmental organisations, etc), or worse, are condemned as primordial, illegitimate or backward (fundamentalist, tribalist, etc). This, of course, has an impact not only in understanding the forms and ideologies of resistance of the people to various forces impinging on them (including the apparently faceless ones advocated by the WTO, etc, such as markets, investments, patent laws on biodiversity, etc) but, how, in turn such struggles and resistance re-structure, or could re-structure, the institutions/apparatuses of the state. We thus deprive ourselves of an important piece of locally generated knowledge, values and cultures.

It is these types of theoretical perspectives which, for example, caused two important African research bodies – the Third World Forum and CODESRIA – to mount research agendas on Popular Struggles and Social Movements respectively (see Nyong'o, ed. 1987 and Mamdani & Wamba, ed. 1995). These efforts have considerably taken the African discourse beyond the state-civil society polarity and may be more useful in helping us to elicit the impact of globalisation and the resistance to it in our own concrete situation. The kinds of struggles documented in these studies also occur in Tanzania. In one form or the other people thus resist the impact of globalisation. However, not much sustained research has been done in the country to unravel how people organise their resistance using their own material, spiritual and traditional, as well as civil organisational resources. I will briefly cite two examples, to illustrate some of these points.

#### ***NAFCO versus the Barabaig***

The National Agriculture and Food Corporation (NAFCO) was established as a state corporation in 1969. Around 1970, with aid from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the government entered into a gargantuan project called the Tanzania-Canadian Wheat Project. The area that was identified is situated on the Basotu Plains in the Hanang district of Arusha region (northern Tanzania). This area belongs to the Barabaig or Datoga people who are agro-pastoralists and some among them (including the Iraqw and Somali) had also developed successful middle-level wheat farming (Raikes, 1971).

Over 100,000 acres of land was alienated to NAFCO without consultation of the communities concerned and without even following the procedures provided in existing law. For example, a witness in the case of *Mulbadaw versus NAFCO* (High Court Civil Case No 10 of 1981 at Arusha) described the procedures of alienating peasant and pastoral land as follows:

*'When we start a project the peasants are informed through the instruments of the Government and the Party. A letter is written from NAFCO Headquarters to the regional Party Chairman who was then also the Regional Commissioner. He then spreads the message to the villagers through the Katibu Kata (ward secretary), etc. The NAFCO Manager in the area also assists in the spread of the information. In the 1980/81 season we had to move people out. The procedure followed was to inform the Katibu Kata of the affected area. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1979 I saw the Katibu Kata to instruct him to move out the peasants who were in the area earmarked for expansion.'* (quoted in Shivji, 1998: p10)

The description is not untypical. This is how things were done during the heyday of the one-party system with directives coming from the top and people just informed to make way for what went under the guise of a *national project* or a project in the *public interest*. (Shivji, 1990 *passim*).

The project has had an enormous adverse effect on the community as they have lost their pasturelands, resulting in the decimation of their herds. The large-scale prairie-type farming has also resulted in the destruction of trees and other vegetation affecting rain patterns and soil erosion (Lane, 1996). Meanwhile, the relationship between NAFCO and the surrounding community has been one of hostility and antagonism. Incidences of abuse of human rights, the beating and arrest of pastoralists, and confiscation of cattle on the pretext of trespass have been common (Shivji & Tenga, 1985; Shivji, 1990; Kisanga Commission, 1993).

The Barabaig people have not simply taken this oppression sitting down. During the one-party era they used Party channels open to them, while in the early eighties a number of court cases were opened. In the late eighties they formed their own civil organisations and NGOs. With the help of researchers and other activists their case was publicised, particularly in Canada, resulting in the appointment of a government commission (Kisanga Commission, 1993) to investigate human rights abuses (for the campaign see Lane, 1996, p165 *e. seq.*). So, available civil society avenues of struggle have been explored. One of the more interesting forms of struggle, however, which I have not seen seriously researched into and documented, is the struggle of the Barabaig women for their community's land.

A story in a newspaper a couple of years ago (citation misplaced) reported that Barabaig women held an *only women* traditional meeting in the forest to pressurize their men to fight for their land. Apparently, this type of meeting is part of the tradition of the Barabaig people. Women meet, discuss and adopt resolutions and do not return to the villages until their deliberations are done. It is said, they also have their own sanctions against their men, such as boycotting household chores to ensure enforcement of their decisions.

### *NCCA versus the Maasai*

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCCA) is a statutory body, which oversees the famous Ngorongoro Conservation area. This area covers some 60 percent of the Ngorongoro district and has over 50,000 Maasai residents (based on Shivji & Kapinga, 1998). The residents were shifted to the Ngorongoro plains when the Serengeti was created as a national park in the late fifties, with a written agreement from the then colonial government that their interests would be paramount in the new area.

Since the creation of the conservation area, Maasai residents have had a running battle against the NCCA Authority as more and more of their rights have been curbed. In particular, they have a deep-seated grievance since 1975, when cultivation was prohibited in the Area by law.

The NCCA has such enormous powers of governance, law-making and enforcement and supervision over the residents that it can in effect be considered a governmental body. Yet the residents over whom those powers are exercised – and there are many instances of abuse of power as well – have no representation in the Authority. As a matter of fact, where the by-laws of the Authority conflict with those of the District Council (local government), those of the Authority prevail. In effect, therefore, the Maasai are literally disenfranchised in that they lack citizen's rights to be represented in *local government*.

For over thirty years now the Maasai have been resisting and fighting for their land rights and other human rights, their rights to participate in making conservation policies and generally for their right to be part of the governance structures directly affecting them. In this they have very effectively and systematically used their traditional Maasai structures of *Laigwenak* (traditional Maasai elders) to ensure legitimacy and accountability. They have combined the traditional leadership and accountability structures with modern civil non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other means of national and international campaigning to publicise their plight. Again, this form of struggle and resistance has not been studied in any great depth.

These two case studies, which are not untypical, bring out several strands, which need to be further explored. In both cases, the usual justification for forcibly integrating the communities into the so-called process of globalisation is in terms of some other so-called developmentalist ideology of modernisation, with both the Barabaig and the Maasai presented as *backward* people. Nationally, statist top-down approaches have prevailed to the exclusion of the democratic process of participation and consultation. Internationally, the *magic wand* of foreign investment as the agency of development has been waved incessantly in spite of evidence to the contrary. For example, studies have shown that the Tanzania-Canadian Wheat Project has been a story of failure, from whatever point of view – environmental, economic, etc. – it is assessed (Lane, 1996, *passim*).

The studies also indicate that there are processes of resistance on the ground, which seem to combine skilfully available civil forms of resistance with traditional forms of legitimacy and organisation. But, given the ultimate statist, modernist,

developmentalist and donor-driven biases in the conceptual framework of research, these remain under-researched.

## ***Preliminary conclusions and approaches to setting a research agenda***

Our brief discussion in this paper leads us to identify the following broad topics and approaches to setting a research agenda in the area of globalisation and popular resistance.

1. To understand the processes of globalisation, its impact on the people and the *role of civil society* in the process of transformation, we need to generate a rigorous conceptual/theoretical framework. Therefore, issue must be joined with contending discourses on globalisation so as to crystallize basic theoretical guides and this should be part of any basic research agenda. In other words, the generating of theoretical knowledge should not be considered the monopoly of the intellectuals and researchers of the North alone. Intellectuals and researchers in Africa need to intervene consciously in this process.
2. The guidelines so generated would in turn guide and, in the process be refined by, basic empirical research on the impact of globalisation on the lives and livelihoods of the vast majority of people (*e.g.* land, environment, biodiversity and its *traditional* uses, etc.) (see URT, 1992). By and large, over the last ten or fifteen years, basic research on what exactly is happening in, and to, our societies has virtually ceased as paid consultancies and pragmatic policy-making have taken over the time and intellectual resources of some of our best brains. Any serious research organisation has to plan and make a conscious contribution towards reversing this trend.
3. The impact of globalisation is not simply one-sided but people defend and resist it in various organisational forms and through various ideological prisms (*pockets of resistance*). The process of domination and resistance in turn generates structures of state governance which need to be closely analysed as well as their potential for re-structuring of our state and civil society institutions explored. This calls for basic research on actually existing struggles beyond the more visible; the so-called modern, civil society struggles.

The theories, practices and pragmatism of the globalisation-modernisation paradigm have hitherto proved to be a great failure in understanding changes on the one hand, and helping to produce pointers in the direction of desirable change on the other. The result is to throw up one's hands in lamentation over the crisis of theory or, more commonly, to appear to act pragmatically by advocating jumping on the bandwagon: '*Globalisation is the reality - it is inevitable and cannot be challenged. There is nothing that can be done except to join it!*' This is partly because the said intellectuals and researchers themselves are deficient in their knowledge and understanding of how people in their everyday lives deploy their indigenous resources to resist adversity and adverse changes in their societies. It is at the strategic inter-face of understanding change and helping to guide it that the role of basic research should be located.

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*In late 1998 a workshop on **Local Perspectives on Globalisation** was held in Dar es Salaam, organised by the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) and the Tanzanian research institute – Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)*

*A literature search carried out by RAWOO during the preparations for the workshop showed that most of the publications on the subject were about the North. Where implications for countries of the South were considered, they were mostly the results of research work based in the North and focussing primarily on economic issues. The workshop on **Local Perspectives on Globalisation** provided an excellent opportunity to look at globalisation from the perspective of Africa.*

*The papers presented at this workshop represent range of perspectives from economists, lawyers, environmentalists, engineers, through to sociologist/journalists. The convergence of participants' views was the conclusion that Africa is being marginalised as it is catapulted into the global village and that the quest for strategies to address and minimise the negative impacts of globalisation must be given highest priority. Empirical research and knowledge of local realities must underpin debate and dialogue if the process of mitigation of the negative consequences of globalisation is to be properly undertaken.*

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