BOOK REVIEW

The Analyst, the Psychiatrist, the Soothsayer and the Handicapped: Africa and Globalisation: *Challenges of Globalisation: South African Debates with Manuel Castells*, edited by Johan Mueller, Nico Cloete and Shireen Badat, 2001 (1)

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Introduction

At lunch, on a sunny summer day in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an acquaintance posed the teaser: How do you tell an analyst from a psychiatrist? "You take them to a striptease," someone answered. "The one watching the stripper is the psychiatrist, the one watching the psychiatrist is the analyst." That was 36 years ago, and this image came back to me in almost total recall as I read through the pages of Challenges of Globalisation: South Africa Debates Manuel Castells, while airborne at 30 000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean, flying from London's Heathrow Airport to New York's John F Kennedy Airport.

Challenges of Globalisation is the literary derivative of a two-day seminar held in Gauteng, South Africa, from June 22 to 23, 2000, and conducted by Professor Manuel Castells of the University of California, Berkeley, and his friend and colleague, Professor Martin Carnoy of Stanford University. The seminar focused on Castells' views on globalisation, and the presumed end of the long-awaited final phase of decline into absolute irrelevance of Africa, and of those societies with the faintest resemblance to Africa. It was sponsored by South Africa's Centre for Higher Education Transformation, with generous contributions from several foundations, universities and development agencies.

The seminar consisted of essentially four sessions: The Network Society, the Net and the Self, Technology and Development, and Higher Education and the Network Society. Each session opened with a presentation by Castells, followed by discussants' comments, and an ensuing open debate. Professor Carnoy was spliced into the interstices between Castells and the discussants at the opening session on the Network Society, to further explain Castells, in his own presence, as a tactical insurance, as it were, against any inadvertent misunderstanding of the eminent professor's views. The gigantic backdrop to all of this was Castells' 1 400-page three-volume work, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. In reading the presentations by the discussants it was difficult to escape the overwhelming effect of the awe the shadow of the sheer size of Castells' magnum opus cast on the deliberations.

A striking quality of *Challenges of Globalisation* is the success with which the dramatic environment of the seminar was captured on paper. The debate, replete with the accompanying plethora of passions, comes alive – to the credit of the editors. The reader is compelled to conjure up the picture of an ancient bonfire, with Castells at the foot of the totem pole, and the others chanting and dancing around him. Castells, doubling as a soothsayer, recites incantations as he throws down the cowries with which he reads the future, under the watchful eye of his protector, Professor Martin Carnoy. Chaka could not have done better!

Challenges of Globalisation, the seminar and the book alike, is itself an unplanned microcosm of the dilemma of creating strategies for the quantum development of Africa and the rest of the developing world, especially the structure of ideas and the framework of their expression which together, undermine

the very possibilities of efficacy. Castells, the "guru" among the dramatis personae, stakes out his claim to the mind of Africa, by postulating a theory of the inevitability of the dominance of the totality of human society by the economic ideology of globalisation. In the context of what he calls the Network Society of today, most social, political and cultural institutions, which have been the backbone of the African and other Third World societies, are moribund. One might have assumed that Castells would add, "unless they embrace globalisation and its enabling network society". But for all practical purposes, he simply suggests that much of Africa, except perhaps his host country, South Africa, cannot escape the curse of this inevitable decline leading ultimately to irrelevance. Castells calls this hopelessly chronically ill and ill-fated society "the Fourth World".

Castells details his view of the evolution of the so-called New Economy as the result of several parallel developments, most essentially: the globalisation of financial markets; the integration of money markets; the speculative movement of financial flows which are linked to both; the god-like powers of market valuation firms; and the dominant role of international financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

All these processes have been facilitated by the evolution of Internet technology, which has enabled the linking of institutions in a global communications network of both individual nodes and sub-networks. This technological innovation and the transactions and activities it has enabled, together form the basis of what he calls "globalisation". The society that has emerged from this new modus operandi of international trade and finance, and the people whose societies derive maximum benefit from the advantages so created, Professor Castells calls "the Network Society". Not quite by accident, the contours of the Network Society are essentially identical to those of the industrial world.

This scenario has transformed the nature and dynamics of international trade. Various factors affecting the New Economy are: the relative value of manufactured goods over raw material; the internationalisation of production; and what Castells claims to be the globalisation of science and technology. All of these have transformed labour markets.

These developments, according to Castells, have resulted in the further marginalisation of the developing world. By not having comparative capacity in network access and technology, and presumably, the trained human resource to master and manipulate such technology, the developing world becomes increasingly isolated from the new world.

Globalisation, for Castells, is the only scenario for the new world, and any society which has not embraced it or has no significant role in it, with no prospect of doing so, is doomed to virtual extinction as a recognisable society. For Africa, the least among the less-endowed in Castells' new world, the picture is more absolute. Africa is condemned to what he calls the "black hole of informational capitalism".

Castells makes many proclamations about the current and future state of the world and the humanity within it, without at least a mild effort at logic, empiricism or justification. For example, the "double logic of inclusion and exclusion (of the network society) cuts across countries, so the notion of a North and South divide no longer prevails". Similarly, he declares major institutions of society, such as organised labour, and even institutional education, to be either obsolete or irrelevant. The nation-state, marginalised by the reach of global networking, has also become virtually irrelevant, unable or ill-equipped, to provide for its people, the social securities of the erstwhile welfare state.

Of particular importance to the participants of the seminar and to this book resulting from the seminar, is Castells' utter fatalism about Africa. Besides dismissing an entire continent of 750 million people as irrelevant and outside the arena of meaningful human existence, what he calls the "Fourth World,"

Castells makes several illogical connections of causality, which do not stand up to the most basic test of reason. Most important to me of these is his direct linkage of poverty, ethnicity and crime. "As economies and societies come under stress, corruption, ethnic strife, crime and civil wars emerge in most of the world, disintegrating states and societies". Implicitly, richer and more networked societies have less criminality, and poorer societies with lower Internet connectivity, are more prone to criminality. This is, perhaps, the most dangerous assertion by Castells, one most likely culled from local news reports about prevalent crimes in post-apartheid South Africa, and one which surprisingly went unchallenged by the discussants and general commentators.

In today's global dispensation, rural populations tend to be equated with poverty. Rural societies are traditional societies, and it does not require much to know the extent to which traditional societies abhor criminality and corruption, with serious consequences for those who breach traditional laws in this regard. Conversely, corruption is common fare in urban and industrial societies, with the bulk of the major crime and corruption now taking place, thanks to Castells' own global Internet networks. Money laundering, stock fraud, currency manipulation and scams all benefit from the increased global reach of the network society. The young and independent South Africa has been a victim, not a perpetrator, of this.

Giving Castells his due

I should state at the onset, that the serious debate captured in this book (and the stimulus for this review article) owe themselves to the very stimulating stridency and provocative courage of his opinions. In particular, the fascination he triggers in us, as well as the mental revolt he compels, acting as it were, as an intellectual agent provocateur, deserve acknowledgement.

Castells' strength lies in the stamina with which he garners information, including statistics, and the audacity with which he assigns such information to conclusions, without first converting them into knowledge and without the constraining compulsion to provide a justifiable causality or link. Add to this his mastery of the phenomena of the peripheral manifestations of information technology and its applications, and his ability to take centre stage in the debate of development in an era of globalisation, is firmly established. Further add the keen sense on the part of his African audience, of dreams unfulfilled for a continent once poised to mobilise its enormous material, cultural, and intellectual wealth for vast development, and the resulting pessimism of even the best of the continent, and it was two field days for Castells.

Carried away by the charm of a continent too depressed or disillusioned to defend itself, and perhaps too aware of its less-than-respectable performance to challenge any diagnosis, Castells crossed over from scholar to soothsayer and messenger of doom, a change of profession ill-advised in a continent famous for its tradition of medicine men and soothsayers. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, the totality of bleakness of Castells' prediction for Africa triggered a robust response from the discussants and his primarily African audience. As for Castells the soothsayer, he is yet to learn that key to the profession of soothsayers is predicting ultimate hope and reprieve, however circuitous the path.

Analysis and response

One after the other, the discussants took issue with Castells' conclusions, especially with his dire predictions about Africa. Shiv Visvanathan, a senior fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi, India, took Castells to task on philosophical, historical and anthropological grounds. "There is about the network society," he writes, "a sense of necrophilic time, amnesiacal time, the time of nuclearism, the genocidal time of obsolescence and instant wars. If a network is a ganglion of connections, then the net society is an impoverished connection of time." Visvanathan throws a

challenge to probe "the notions of pathology, health, normalcy of the network society".

Professor Charles Secudo of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, takes Castells to task on his basic statements about the developing world, especially Africa. He challenges the assumptions, which underlie his assertions, and mildly suggests that such assumptions are flawed. Secudo made exciting reading, as he appeared to prepare to strip Castells of the cover of his disputable logic. However, Secudo surprisingly accepts the claims of globalisation as inevitable, suggesting instead, that globalisation might respond to some modification. "While the phenomenon of globalisation is inevitable, perhaps unstoppable," he writes, "its form and character are subject to change." Made pregnant with expectation by his measured disputation, one was left hanging by Secudo when he suddenly aborted his most promising analysis.

Stephen Gelb, of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, challenges Castells' assertions about the rapidly emerging irrelevance of the State in a globalised economy. Drawing on the politics of transition of South Africa from apartheid to democracy, he demonstrates the critical role of the State and, in fact, its growing relevance in meeting the challenge to deliver on the promise of a better life and greater opportunity for the masses of South Africans. Joel Netshitenzhe, for his part, draws on the Communist Manifesto to challenge Castells' notion of Africa as a "black hole of exclusion". Encouragingly, he sees Africa's challenges as opportunities.

Particularly interesting is Andre Patel's summary of the debate, which took place during the two-day seminar. Of major importance in that debate was not only the consistent rejection of Castells' postulation about the inevitable qualities and trends of a new world under globalisation in a Network Society, but his less than sound understanding of the African situation.

South Africa and globalisation

A sub-theme of the seminar was a special focus on the implications of globalisation for South Africa. The discussions played around the complex theme of the uniqueness of South Africa in the African context. Much was said about the advantages of South Africa's wealth and the threat of being drowned by the burden of the rest of the continent. Much of this discussion is misleading and quite disingenuous. It becomes dangerous if South Africans believe it and design their global strategies accordingly.

This thinking is partly a reincarnation of an earlier propaganda developed at the height of the apartheid regime in which the world was told that Black South Africans were better off than their fellow-Africans. Before that, the John Birch Society used to justify racism in America by proclaiming that Blacks in the United States owned more cars than all Africans put together. Although this is a major subject on its own, requiring more space than is possible here, a few comments might suffice.

The African continent has never been a burden on South Africa's shoulder, and is not so now. On the contrary, the absolute commitment of all Africans on the continent, and throughout the Diaspora, to the liberation of South Africa as part of the total liberation of the entire continent, was the critical force behind the garland struggle of South Africans. The rest of Africa did not see this responsibility as a burden, but as a duty of brotherhood. They did not demand compensation or make deals for the same. They simply did what their hearts and minds told them had to be done. It is important that South Africa keeps this legacy in mind as it is wooed away from the continent. It is my belief that South Africa's future, and indeed its hopes of a better future in the global context, depend entirely on being part and parcel of this heavily endowed continent. Amnesia (premature or permanent) on this historic unity of purpose by Africa, the same needed for a united front in meeting the challenges of globalisation, would only expose South Africa to a more severe risk of marginalisation, cut off once again from its roots.

Reference is often made to the pressure of the migration of Africans to South Africa as evidence of the threat the rest of Africa poses to South Africa. Few remember that the rest of Africa was home to so many South Africans throughout the struggle. To make much of this point borders on the indecent. Nigeria was home to President Thabo Mbeki, and many more. Nigeria financed the African National Council (ANC). At one point, all Nigerian civil servants contributed 10% of their salaries to the ANC. Zambia was bombed, but not into submission, for providing a safe haven for the struggle. The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) made the liberation of South Africa its premiere preoccupation, and did not rest until its accomplishment. All of Africa led that support, backed by others from the Diaspora and from around the world.

Apropos the will and capacity of Africa to transform its condition in a globalisation environment, the liberation of South Africa against the opposition of the very powers forcing globalisation down Africa's throat, is the shining testimonial to this capacity. Embracing its memory, and using it to stimulate a new call to battle for self-development and global competitiveness, should be the basis of a new clarion call.

In naked economic terms as well, a strong African market is South Africa's best hopes of withstanding the intermittent assault on its currency and economy. The balance of trade between South Africa and much of the rest of the continent is in her favour.

In human resource terms, South Africa can benefit from the vast pool of globally competitive African expertise spread throughout the world. These Africans had the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills at the time their South African brothers and sisters were taking care of the first business of liberation. They not only offer South Africa their skills, but also constitute a very important role model for young South African men and women now struggling to find their feet in a new democratic country.

In political terms, there are also many lessons to learn, and more best practices than the prejudice against Africa might suggest. African diplomats have always been among the best in the world, as South Africa's leadership knows only too well from having worked with them during the struggle.

From the point of view of recent history as well, nothing belies the claim of African inability to alter the destiny prescribed for it, or highlights Africa's capacity for self-determination more than the story of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. This was a task taken on by the African continent as a goal they were prepared to die for. With this total backing, and the commitments of countries like Nigeria (where President Thabo Mbeki and others lived), Zambia (which was bombed relentlessly by apartheid South Africa), and even the Africans in the Diaspora as far away as Harlem, the South African struggle was empowered and emboldened to rise to the challenge.

The arguments of not risking being sunk by the rest of Africa could have undermined this continental support. In the global struggle for the soul of South Africa, and of Africa itself, our South African brothers and sisters must hold fast to a moral imperative for their own sake: If people are good enough to be your brothers and sisters in the struggle, they must be good enough to be your partners, in its aftermath.

So, in terms of the debate on South Africa and globalisation in the context of the dialogue with Castells, Africa is not a liability or threat to South Africa. It constitutes a profound opportunity for a united continental advancement. Portraying South Africa as the Great White Hope, or rather, South Africa seeing itself as something above the rest of the continent, will only feed the penchant for division where strength in togetherness is the answer to a common challenge. South Africa, like any other African country, has much to give to, and to gain from, every other African country, each in its particular area of resource or expertise, each according to its needs, and in all cases, on the basis of fairness, equity, mutual access and the common interest of brotherhood.

Globalisation: The view from the South

There is a fundamental conflict in the claims of the industrial world about the intent and impact of globalisation, and the view from down South. Globalisation, for us, rather than indicate the decline of the role of the State in the industrial world, is little more than the calculated extension and expansion of the role of the industrial state in championing the headstrong and relentless march of their economic forces into the heartland of the developing world. Unlike the earlier days when multinational corporations went it alone with the blessings of their governments, globalisation is a return to the days of the state-sponsored explorers and missionaries who marched on Africa and the new world, protected by the machinery of state. What is new is that what used to be perceived as the separation of state and corporation, no longer exists. They have become one corporate body, with the State acting as diplomat, advocate, protector and defender, while the corporation acts as operator, researcher and implementer. The preparations for international negotiations these days witness national delegations that combine government officials and corporate operatives.

Globalisation is clearly not so much a harmless attempt to extend the fraternity of national economies for the betterment of all, but the deliberate and strategic extension of domestic economies into the very heart of all economies, so as to subsidise the shortfalls of market saturation and high labour costs of the domestic industrial markets, which becomes the bargain situation in the developing economies. Contrary to Castells' assertion, the aggressive onslaught of globalisation is driven by the governments and nation-states of the industrial world. Western economies do not simply show up at the doorsteps of the developing world. The strategies and policies that go to WTO are crafted under the auspices of the governments of the industrial countries, and negotiated by their appointees, since most such forums recognise only member-states.

Furthermore, the gains, asymmetrical as they are, of globalisation are enforced by nation-states. The nation-state therefore plays a more important role in the fortunes of the multinational corporations today, than they ever did in the past. The difference is that now there is more convergence of objective, that is, until the re-emergence of the youthful protests of conscientious objectors, who find moral indignation to challenge the relentless imposition of globalisation on an unsuspecting developing world, before it could even understand what was taking place.

Our problem in Africa is that the State is so irrationally envious of what it perceives as the potential profit to the private sector, that it often harasses and inhibits its efforts, while simultaneously embracing the leaders and operatives of foreign industrial corporations.

A new version of this is the growing fascination African leaders have with global advisers in preference to African experts. They need to answer one simple question: How do you expect the chief executive of a global corporation to advise you on how to build indigenous capacity to compete with his corporation in your market, which he already controls?

The self-handicapped: All questions and no answers

In all of this, however, what one finds disturbing in the overall debate with Castells and company, is the fact that most of the discussants, all the African ones, while challenging Castells for his being the dark soothsayer, did not attempt to provide their own version of the true African condition and the underlying dynamics of our present malaise. Worse still, none of them attempted to suggest possible solutions to what everyone agrees to be an unacceptable condition. One expected answers, even if incomplete, from such excellent scholars. In fact, one could smell that promise at the outset of say Secudo's paper. And when, instead, they accuse Castells of not providing solutions and then stop short, one could not help but feel disappointed. (2)

Expertise in problem-enhancement – fear of problem-solving

Is it possible that as African scholars, we have become so attached to our problems that we do not dare risk attempting solutions, for fear that the imperfections of such suggestions might jeopardise the solidity of our expertise on problems? Analysis of problems is really worthless unless we at least attempt to evolve solutions, no matter how incomplete.

In this regard, at least so as not to be accused of not taking my own advice, I would risk a few ideas.

Anatomy of seemingly intractable problems

The basis of our seemingly intractable African condition rests on psychological, philosophical, and intellectual factors over and above historical, political and opportunity factors. As a people, we have come to rely heavily on the comfort of our history of oppression. We milk it for every excuse not to have to risk finding solutions to our shortcomings.

In my study of the anatomy of seemingly intractable problems such as those of Africa appear to be, I have found that when problems appear to defy solution, there are four possibilities:

1. The problems are poorly identified and defined;

2. The problems are misdiagnosed, in which case;

3. The solutions are flawed, and if so, the application of such flawed solutions to the problems itself creates new problems which often consume scarce resources, wasting our efforts while leaving our original problems to fester beneath the new problems created by our flawed solutions; or

4. If all of these do not apply, chances are that what appears to be a problem is in fact not a problem in the first place, hence it cannot respond to solutions.

Ownership of our problems

Africans have become too willing to relinquish the ownership of our problems to any neophyte who has the courage or audacity to claim expertise over our lives and destiny. I have advocated a claim over the ownership of our problems in Africa (3). Creativity and innovation are vested in problem-solving. If you steal my problem, you create two problems for me: You deprive me of the opportunity of innovation inherent in solving my problems; and you leave me with the perpetual guilt of incompetence. The first makes me irrelevant to the design of the strategies of my destiny, relegating me to the roadside as a mere observer to the shaping of my life and future, and the latter consigns me to the pack of ne'er-do-wells, left to sleepwalk through life, while someone else extracts the inspiration and empowerment (and the benefits and intellectual property) derivable from meeting the challenge of my problems. This provides a truer picture of Africa than that offered by Castells.

Imprisoned by the trappings of our scholarship

In trying to understand the challenges we face as a continent and a people, we must allow ourselves the discomfort of providing for the possibility of some psychological or simply intangible constraints. As an educated class, the intellectual elite of Africa is entrapped by so many circumstances and impositions (most of which have to do finally with how we perceive our success) that we can hardly free ourselves to use our vast capacity to do what we so eminently can do – for ourselves and Africa. Let us look at a

few of the entrapments.

Labels

We are trapped by labels. We are developing people, Third World people, now Fourth World people thanks to Professor Castells. We are Least Developed Countries (LDCs). We are Afro-pessimists. We are poor. We are now in a "black Hole", again thanks to Professor Castells. If understanding who we are, or what we are, under the burden of these names and characterisations is so difficult, how much more is trying to cope with them?

Now, why don't we simply return to being what we have always been, simply, "Africans"? As Africans, we know exactly whom we are, where we belong, what belongs to us, and what we must do to develop and preserve it. We are Africans, not sub-Saharan Africans, not Anglophone Africans, not Francophone Africans, just Africans. Now if we need a phonic prefix on occasion, then let call ourselves "Afrophone" (4).

Differentiations

Everyone is constantly busy trying to separate Africans by distinctions. The rich, the not-quite-so-rich, the poor, the urban, the Yoruba, the Ndebele, stable African countries versus unstable ones, powerful African countries versus weak ones, with advice for each of us on how not to be like the others. As a result, we avoid pooling our intellectual and strategic resources and experiences to face our challenges as a people, very much like the Europeans, the Americans and others have done. Long after the seeming end of the political Cold War, we are still torn apart by alien interests, aided and abetted by our own internal insecurities, and our failure to level with each other as each other's keeper.

Many years ago, at the height of the oil boom when Nigeria made even European and American illiterates rich, Nigeria was the place to be. Then, that waned. At its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe was advised not to be like Nigeria, and bought it, notwithstanding how much Nigeria committed to its liberation, including nationalising such star British assets as Standard Bank and Shel,l as a warning to Margaret Thatcher not to mess with the final stages of independence. At its independence a few years ago, South Africa became the new darling of the industrial world, and received its share of advice not to be like Nigeria and Zimbabwe, because it was special.

Only a few short years later, there is pressure on South Africa each time it seeks to exercise its independence in guiding its own political, social and health objectives. There are rumblings as to whether or not South Africa is all it was meant to be, and the chaps are back in Nigeria, in search of wealth. In fact, when the late President Laurent Kabila was still on the march toward Kinshasa as a rebel leader, the boys ran after him in the bush, pushing him to sign mining leases. A few months later, he too became a questionable leader.

In all of this, we simply must recognise that no people can build their aspirations in fulfilment of other people's expectations. If they do, they risk waking up one day to the painful realisation that all they have been doing is sleep-walking through time, leaving their destiny in the hands of others whose competence or expertise to do so is non-existent. Africa has too many external experts. In the meantime, it is "killing" its own globally competent experts, through frustration, marginalisation and disrespect.

Myth of incompetence

We are trapped by the myth of incompetence, so much so that our leaders (political as well as business)

have not even as much as tried to test it. To the extent that all peoples consider their citizens, wherever they may be, as an integral part of their human resource assets, Africa has a vast pool of male and female experts in every field of knowledge and scholarship, from education to philosophy, humanities to sciences, research scientist, engineers, space engineers and more. There are in every respectable academic or industrial institution in the world. They are bankers; they are at the World Bank and IMF. They are legal experts. They are international civil servants and diplomats. They are at home and abroad. So how can anyone justifiably say that Africa lacks the human resource expertise to compete in the network society of the new globalised environment?

Language

We are also trapped by the language of discourse because of our fear to take hold of that language and manipulate it to express ourselves. Our professional image is too often tied to how much we sound like our colleagues in the industrial world. Consequently, we strive to pass the same judgements they pass on us, shy away from re-examining their conclusions from the vantage point of our superior knowledge of our own environment, and the fear of seeming "sentimental" should we begin to challenge their misconceptions about Africa.

Fear of failure

We have become so enamoured of scholarship as defined by the academic institutions and societies of our industrial world, where most of us were trained, that our desire to be upright members of the resulting fraternities pushes us to protect the "objectivity" of our scholarship, a euphemism for not getting involved. The problem is that to the extent that the theories and strategies, even the language in which these are couched, derive from the very society which seeks to extend its global reach to control our resources and productive capacity (in order to maximise its profits and minimise the possibility of having to respond to waves which might be created by our own indigenous effort to compete), to that extent, are we trapped in alien attire.

This comes out deep down as our fear of failure. As long as we are experts on what is wrong with Africa, it is safe. We take an African problem, elaborate on it, and pass it on to our fellow experts who also enhance the problem. So that as the problem goes from expert to expert, it gets bigger and bigger. But we lack the courage to try to solve it, for fear that we might fail, a risk we consider too much to take. And yet, problem-solving is the essence of scholarship and expertise. What we must do is dismiss the notion that our solutions must be complete or iron-clad for them to be praiseworthy. We focus of solutions. We contribute our share. Others take on from there, challenge us and make their contribution. We advance the process of solution, all the time gaining new insights and capacities which themselves will accrue additional peripheral benefits. We must make finding solutions to Africa's problems the new passion and fashion among all of us, at home and abroad. This is what a renaissance means. Any other definition is flawed.

The myth of Africa's lack of expertise in Science and Technology

The debate in the book shockingly takes for granted the assertion of a lack of human expertise in Africa to meet the challenges of globalisation. The reason is that we have never taken the trouble to quantify Africa's globally competitive expertise in every area of knowledge, science and technology, spread throughout the world. African experts are at practically all the major institutions, which drive the global economy, and at high levels of expertise. They are in space technology, computing, telecommunications, banking, finance, and more. In addition, many African professors are teaching Americans, Europeans, Koreans, Indians, Chinese, and others, economics, physics, electrical engineering, medicine, in the best universities and research institutions of the world.

With particular respect to Castells' discussion of the primacy of the role of science and technology in the network society, Africans hold patents in the field. It was an African computer expert who invented the formula that allows super computers carry out 3.1 billion calculations per second. President Bill Clinton called Philip Emeagwali, a Nigerian who grew up in a refugee camp during the Biafran War, "one of the great minds of the Information age". CNN called him "a father of the Internet". And there are many Africans like him, men and women from all over the continent, all over the world.

So our problem is that we have buckled so much under the pressure of misnomers and uninformed deprecation, that we do not even bother to find out what we really have and know. Quantifying our global expertise will not only serve as a tool with which to build our global competitiveness, but also become a major source of inspiration to our young ones. This, at a time when they are being cowered into hopelessness and low self-esteem, by the badgering condemnation of an uninformed world.

With Africans playing a major role building the knowledge capacity of the networked society, our problem is neither demand nor expert capacity, but political will, and the courage to take our destiny in our own hands. We will need to own our problems, and find the courage and other wherewithal, to convert our challenges into opportunities, and deploy our knowledge, will-power, resource and energy to seize the time to build Africa to global competitiveness in a truly equitable and fair environment.

Necessary rules of globalisation

In this regard, I have stated that if at all globalisation is to be considered a universal trading policy, it must meet certain requirements. Trade among nations must:

1. Be fair and equitable.

2. Involve mutual access to each other's market, and collaboration in third party markets.

3. Enhance the development of comparative, competitive capacity, in the absence of which there must be an affirmative action programme to build such capacity so that Africa does not pay for the same expertise at each turn. Such capacity building will require equitable access to the leading global institutions of higher learning, so that young Africans can have access to the best education their future competitors have access to.

4. Involve research and development, not only to provide dedicated solutions to Africa-specific challenges, but also to enhance the development of intellectual property, the mainstay of the new economy. (5)

The issue then is establishing a level playing field, in accordance with these conditions. These will require a review of the myriad of agreements, joint ventures and more, which almost always restrict African production to domestic markets while the licensing companies keep the global market to themselves. You cannot be part of a global economy if you are restricted to your domestic market.

Other considerations

We must also address the psychological problems. For South Africa, there are specific pitfalls. Among them, is the pressure to sell a bag of tricks about the superiority of South Africa to the rest of the continent and the danger of being buried by the problems of the rest of the continent. A major feature of a globalised economy is the divide between apparent fact and reality. Success in this new dispensation will depend heavily on the extent to which societies and economies master this disparity.

Conclusion

Credit is due Professor Castells to the extent that his excellently articulate, though profoundly misinformed, analysis of the dynamics of individual and communal pursuit of self-actualisation, and his distressfully faithless consignment of Africa to inexorable doom in what he unfortunately calls "the black hole," sufficiently jolted the Africans in his audience from their confounding complacency. The assumptions of Africa's inevitable collapse in the face of the globalisation onslaught of the industrial world, constitutes wishful thinking of the lesser sort. A little bit of historical perspective might have suggested to Professor Castells that a people who survived the most vicious, prolonged and sustained attack by man against man through centuries of oppression, slavery, apartheid and their contemporary incarnations and still are able to stand on their two feet, certainly can survive the challenge and machinations of the same onslaught –economic slavery reincarnated as globalisation – no matter how hard the struggle.

The problem is not whether or not Castells is wrong in his assessment of the inevitable victory of globalisation against fairness and equity in trade among nations, but of the Africans and others of the developing world who seem to lack the courage, energy, resolve, commitment and self-determination to take their destiny into their own hands and shape their future, replete with abundant reinforcement and gratification. For Africans, Castells is not our problem; we are.

Our challenge is to find the courage as African leaders of thought, as political and corporate leaders, as teachers and scholars, to begin the process of taking ownership of our challenges and deploying our genius to find solutions to our problems, eliciting innovation and intellectual property in the process. Armed by such commitment to self-development through indigenous initiative, we can find the room and leisure to articulate our vision for the world and engage the industrial world on equal terms, to negotiate mutual interests, and seek, on that platform of equity and fairness, with mutual respects and access. We can seek to shape a new and truly global context for international trade and interaction, which meets the best promise of giving Africa and the world the best humanity is capable of. Until such an eventuality, we must stand by our belief that what is not good for us, or fair to us, is unacceptable to us, any global pressure or posturing notwithstanding. The Chinese example is instructive.

Credit is due the Centre for Higher Education Transformation for organising the seminar, to Professor Castells and Professor Carnoy for the courage to stimulate such an energetic intellectual process which promises to awaken Africans to the need to do their own thinking for themselves, to the discussants for setting the stage for the task that lies ahead for all of us, to the editors of the book for the fine job of recreating the dynamic experience of the debates on the pages of this book, and to the publishers for sharing this wholesome experience with all of us who were not present at the symposium.

I must add, parenthetically, that in taking Professor Castells on with his irresistibly provocative argument, there is a part of me that is confident that I am meeting part of his secret hope that he would elicit such serious encounters.

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Endnotes:

1. This article is an extended review of Challenges of Globalisation: South Africa Debates with Manuel Castells, edited by Johan Mueller, Nico Cloete and Shireen Badat, Cape Town, Maskew Miller Longman, 2001.

2. I have chosen to pick on Professor Secudo both because of his excellent credentials, and because, as my countryman, we share a tradition of hearty disputation. In this regard also, I have spared Professor Martin Carnoy any direct critique, partly because he attributed his views to his elaboration of Professor Castells' work, and partly because he comes from my alma mater, Stanford University!

3. See Joseph Okpaku, Sr, E-Culture, Human Culture and In-Between: The Challenges of 21st Century Digital World, ITU Conference on Creating New Leadership for e-culture, Coventry, UK, August 21-24, 2001.

4. This expression was first used in a private conversation in 2000 by a friend of mine, Ms Margie Seck, of the World Bank in Washington, D.C.

5. Joseph O Okpaku, Sr Telecom Africa: Building Africa's Global Competitiveness in the 21st Century, ITU, Africa Telecom 1998, Johannesburg.