




Unmasking resilience as governmentality: towards an Afrocentric epistemology

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Abstract

This paper is a discussion of how indigenous Afrocentric epistemologies proffer critiques and alternative to neoliberal discourses of resilience and what differences it makes for the study of International Politics. There has been an epistemological shift in recent times towards resilience as a form of governance aimed at enhancing the agency and adaptive capacity of populations. This has necessitated the mainstreaming and theorisation of local systems of ontology. Importantly, the current emphasis privileges how societies absorb and manage natural exigencies of life. The underlying assumption of this shift in the contemporary critical and policy discourse is that indigenous forms of “knowledge” and indigeneity can enhance the ability of local actors to navigate the uncertainties of a globalised world. I question this assumption by highlighting the fact that the apparent epistemological interest in local ontology is a crisis resolution strategy that has become necessary after the universal neoliberal project faced crisis and rejection. Given this, the promotion of resilience epistemology is meant to extend the reach of global actors into the deep recesses of peripheral systems and to instruct how resistance can be reduced. This makes resilience a technology or strategy of governmentality, a new emerging form of governance agenda. Given that the globalisation crisis for neoliberalism has not abated, the only insurance of Africa will be to formalise and own its ontology of resilience strategies to insulate its populations from external pressures of disruption.

Keywords Foucault · Governmentality · Resilience · Afrocentricity · Indigeneity · Neoliberal governance

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Introduction

Discourses of resilience as a governing cliché were instrumentally plucked from the ecological systems literature and the physical sciences (Konings 2016). Yet the fact that it has become a buzz concept in international policy-thinking comes as no surprise. The dot.com bubble burst of 2001, the recent global financial bubble burst of 2007–2008, the global war on terror that have been in session since 2001 and its attendant up surge in subaltern militancy are all indicative of disruptive impulses that have put states under enormous strain and stress. To complicate matters further, the precise nature, effect and direction of these developments are not well understood to enable workable policy measures that can be put in place to curb the negative implications they may have on human flourishing. Indeed the energy behind the perturbations cited above is yet to fully work itself out; populations are living in stressful contexts. So, in a way there is direct contact between systems of human thriving and impulses of political and economic disruptions. This has resulted in African countries becoming more, not less, vulnerable to external shocks due largely to the more closely integrated global economy as applied to international politics. Resilient adaptability is fundamental to economic growth. What about population systems in developing countries, particularly the poorest such as those in Africa where the dawn of the neoliberal age has ‘rolled back the state’ in the affairs of people and reduced governments to minimalist entities subservient to forces of the market? Within informal systems increasingly characterised by organic regimes of social relations and which are integrated into global capitalist systems the state and its institutions serve as or aspire to serve as buffers against external disruptive impulses. This was the case during the discredited ‘Washington Consensus’ era where the states sought to guarantee (albeit imperfectly) and provide regimes of human flourishing. With the neoliberal induced minimalist state, governments no longer have the ideological motivation/justification to insulate population systems from external shocks.

How have Africans thrived in a context where the state is minimal in their lives? In other words, what strategies do African people adopt to flourish in a context of full blown global economic crisis unaided by their governments? These questions which seem to have eluded the attention of researchers and policy makers have been long overdue. If African systems are as they commonly characterised in the literature, one would have expected the continent to have been reduced to a political and economic waste land. African society resilience system has frequently been tested by several incidents of external shocks, post-colonial state building, threats and uncertainty. This is self-evidence of their ability to adapt in the face of perturbations, evolve and accommodate change. In the 1970s and 1980s, African countries were able to withstand the worsening state of their economy which is a significant factor to the nature of African resilient system. African populations have shown their own initiative as active and reflexive agents capable of adaptive behaviour specifically in the area (s) of traditions, religion, beliefs, customs and customary institutions. The fact that African populations have not withered away in such contexts gives very strong reasons for a



nanced and matured understanding of the active resilient systems and adaptive capacity on the continent.

On the epistemology level—level conditioning our mode of learning and thought, forms of knowledge and practices—the spectacular rise of resilience in a certain sense, is vague and open to different usages. Rather than merely informing our conception of the practices of governing, it is also firmly rooted in the development of indigenous adaptability and forms of knowledge production. In contradiction to those critical scholars who assert that this ‘epistemological turn’ operates against the backdrop of an apparent appreciation and acceptance of indigenous peoples and indigenous knowledge-production, practices and understandings to development, this so-called epistemological turn romanticises with the discourses on indigenous resilience. It is suggested that in order to appreciate the rationalities shaping the discourses of resilience it is imperative to study it on this level, too.

This paper seeks to establish how specifically Afrocentric indigenous knowledge systems and practices precisely cut against and/or challenge resilience discourses in contemporary critical and governmental imaginaries. Pertinent questions to be explored are whether neoliberal resilience discourses one of rejection or acceptance of indigenous forms of knowledge production or adaptation to complexity and crisis? And second, how does the notion of resilience work as a governing technology or strategy of critical policy discourses and understandings? Essentially the answers to these questions posed lie in the reality in upturning this discourse to rethink and reconsider African resilience differently in order to promote the well-being of African poor populations. Drawing on Foucauldian analytic of governmentality and critical discourse, I demonstrate how it relates to new forms of human subjectivity constructed and articulated through the discourses of resilience. Critical scholarship, echoing Michel Foucault’s governmentality thesis, has sufficiently elaborated on resilience as an externally imposed neoliberal tactic of governance that emphasises individual ability to make the most of ‘situations’ without questioning structural inequalities thereof (Chandler and Richmond 2015). I understand the notion of resilience as a particular form of governance which places emphasis on individual adaptability and responsibility. It emphasises the way that societies adapt to situations of radical uncertainty or externally imposed change (Kevon 2019). Thus resilience is conceptualised not in terms of what it might become, but in terms of what it is actually doing.

The rise of resilience more broadly conceived, must be situated within a particular discourse which is itself related to practices of governance (Mavelli 2019). Foucault’s analytical purchase on discourse is crucial in discerning both discursive and non-discursive consequences of resilience thinking. It also holds possibility in exposing and destabilising the constructions of power-knowledge relations that condition the ways in which we can think about resilience. Conceivably, a Foucauldian approach to discourse is an ensemble of social practices and conditions through which a situated or historically specific reality is made intelligible (Foucault 1972). This grid of intelligibility in many ways legitimises forms of knowledge, expertise and practice that renders the world governable in certain ways (Foucault 2003). Thus, discourses shape the world and simultaneously structure power relations in certain ways. More important resilience discourses result in concrete practices of



thinking and acting through which the African states become a ‘field of intervention of power,’ with particular ‘problems and possible solutions’ to be addressed by ‘development experts’ employed by a plethora of international governing institutions (Escobar 1995, 216, emphasis mine). Discourse evidently constitutes its objects rather than merely representing it. It conveys certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to conduct oneself ‘and “rules out”, limits and restricts other ways of talking, or conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it’ (Hall 2003, 72). The discourse that constitutes the object also to a degree, constitutes a complex mix of knowledge and practices that will inevitably come to function as an instrument of power through which that object is disciplined. Resilience discourses do not simply describe empirical realities on the ground, but constitutes a grid of intelligibility by which to represent and understand the African societies. It is in the context of the above that the relevance of critiques of resilience paradigm resides. It is important to clarify that the idea of resilience is not reducible to neoliberal rationality of governance. However, it does fit neatly with certain ontological commitments of neoliberal forms of governance. It functions as a technology of the neoliberal self by constructing subjects capable of self-sufficiency (Joseph and Humbert 2019).

The overwhelming majority of scholarship to date has disturbingly paid little attention to African alternative to neoliberal resilience discourses in the discipline of International Politics. The ideas and beliefs of the African society that bear on resilience thinking have not been given elaborate investigation and clarification and, thus, stand in real need of profound and extensive analysis. This entry is intended to make some critical contribution to International Politics scholarship and strives to articulate a novel conversation about the attempts to expand epistemological approaches to resilience thinking. Additionally, it contributes to the growing robust critique on the problematic assumptions in the dominant ethos of critical resilience scholarship. Overall, the paper makes an important intervention to knowledge co-operations, co-creation and re-creation which have significant consequences for policy practices. In studying forms of knowledge production and practices around resilience discourse in African society, the aim is to critique the existing hegemonic, Eurocentric epistemic canon and various institutional and discursive mechanisms that sustain it. This will be done through concrete account of the lineaments of indigenous ideas and practices of resilience paradigm. In the following section, I trace the rise of resilience thinking within the context of international intervention and critical policy discourses and practices.

The rise of discourses of resilience to global governance

Resilience is a theoretically vague concept. Defining resilience is notoriously difficult, and in fact, confounds any coherent meaning because of its multiple dimensions which circulate in the contemporary policy-making world (Chandler 2019). It is particularly important to note that the starting assumption and rationale of contemporary critical accounts of resilience thinking underlies the growing awareness of how we might govern globalised complex and interconnected world (Reid 2019).



The spectacular rise of resilience approaches to intervention in contemporary policy discourse has its roots largely in the 1970s and early 1980s from the school of ecology. Since the 1970s and early 1980s, the analytical core of resilience agenda has increasingly given way to emphasis on how people cope with emergent complexity, vulnerability, shocks, life tragedies and uncertainty generated by disastrous events (Hall and Sanders 2015). In this vein, the analysis of resilience invariably is premised on the importance of how societies absorb, adapt and manage natural exigencies of life which marks a new defining feature in liberal internationalist politics (Evans and Reid 2016; Katarína 2015). The dominant narrative that shaped the contemporary critical accounts of resilience of course gained significant salience and traction in the policy-making world and in research within the context of global governance (Combaz 2014).

Discourses of resilience emerged as a critique of neoliberal governance strategies of development to rethink about the indigenous subject as an alternative to the modern liberal subject (Grove 2018). Put somewhat differently, resilience-thinking was supposedly conceived as a way of positing a different kind of policy problematic of the liberal regimes of internationalist politics of the 1980s and 1990s where powerful Western states bore sole political responsibilities for the outcomes of intervention. Contemporary critical accounts of resilience concept explore the ability of living systems to absorb perturbations, reorganise itself by changing the variables and processes that control behaviour (Combaz 2014). Resilience, thus construed is 'the ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate, or recover from the effects of a potentially hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration, or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions' (Reid 2019).

Meanwhile the World Bank in its recent book titled 'The Unbreakable: Building the Resilience of the Poor in the face of Natural Disasters' sees resilience in terms of 'the capacity of a system to tolerate shocks or disturbances and recover' (Hallegatte et al. 2017). 'The Unbreakable' report argues that resilience necessarily is a precondition for successful policy outcomes. What is truly significant here is the capacity of a system to tolerate shocks or disturbances, so integral to neoliberal belief concerned with governing. Think-tanks such as the World Resource Institute argues similarly that resilience approaches, as they put it, are to ensure the ability of people to 'adapt to changing conditions largely depends on learning, planning, or reorganization' (World Resources Institute 2008). For USAID, the policy discourses of resilience therefore represent the ability of individuals, households, communities, institutions, nations, or even value chains and ecosystems to withstand crises, recover from them, recover and adapt and ability to withstand shocks. Implicit or explicit within USAID's resilience discourse is the notion of the governance of planetary life complete.

Over the last few years though, the governing discourses of resilience have received increasing attention in the international politics literature as a form of governance crisis (Simon and Randalls 2016). Resilience thinking was conceived from its outset as a domain for policy intervention within a broadly neoliberal policy and governance (Zebrowski 2014). In particular, numerous critical scholars have explored how resilience approaches as the capacity to adapt and survive



in the face of rapid global changes has become a principal driver behind the regulation of practices through which we are governed and govern ourselves (Reid 2019; Joseph 2016). This can be seen in the seminal work of Julian Reid and David Chandler who assert that while recognising the function of complex ecosystems in shaping the resilience doctrine, draw attention to the neoliberal rationalities which have nevertheless defined it (Chandler and Reid 2018).

Endurance, persistence and adaptation to emergent complexity, uncertainty, insecurity, and rescuing African states and its populations from the risks of financial instability stemming from external shocks reflect the logic of the politics of our times (Evans and Reid 2016). In their influential book 'Resilience Thinking: We Live in a Complex World', Walker and Salt (2012) convincingly and brilliantly argue that 'anyone with a stake in managing some aspect of that world will benefit from a richer understanding of resilience and its implications' in so far as the whole foundation of resilience approach rests on how we might govern this complex world (Katarína 2015). As Chandler and Reid (2018) analyses have shown the policy discourse of resilience is a distinct geological epoch in which collective human activity becomes reconceptualised as dangerous.

This thinking can be seen through self-reflexive ethico-political work on the self and coping understandings of governmental regimes and practices (Anderson 2015; Beck 2015). Resilience thinking provokes the prevailing understandings of problematic practices of governance and liberal regimes of international intervention for rethinking the fundamental coordinates of liberal rationalist construction of the subject but—and, in fact, of greater awareness of our own behaviour. As such, it is the concern to work on the self as a way of transforming the world through shared vulnerability and insecurity. Assumptions informing resilience approaches and practices Evans and Reid (2016) have demonstrated that it has become deeply embedded in the context of new development discourses and rationalities particularly on account of the impossibility of securing ourselves and the need to continually adapt and endure threats and dangers via the neoliberal embrace. The key point about resilience thinking shared by many critical analysts is that it is the normalisation of inconceivable catastrophic imaginaries woven into the fabric of our politics today (Grove and Pugh 2017).

The valorisation of capacities especially in terms of endurance, persistence and adaptation for resilience-thinking has been normalised into the acceptance of vulnerabilities to hazards as the only possible rational course of life complicit with contemporary neoliberal regimes (Chandler and Grove 2017). Resilience as a central concept informing policy frameworks dealing with developmental, social, economic, security and environmental problems is to blur the state/market, individual/society, power/agency dichotomies to facilitate regulatory governing agendas. Resilience discourses assume the state and society as interconnected but distinctly separate realms: specific governmental form and doctrine rationally linked with the shifting understandings of governmental power under neoliberal/contemporary regimes. Discourses of indigeneity subjectivity in many ways, functions discursively to steer the conduct of indigenous peoples and structure their possible field of action. Even though resilience can mean different things in many



policy and academic contexts, however, there is consensus that resilience discourses offer a promising path towards understanding new forms of governance.

Unpicking discourses of resilient indigeneity

This thinking towards the resilience of indigenous individuals' ways of knowing, understandings and being represents an apparent 'epistemological turn' in liberal politics of international interventionism increasingly central to contemporary critical policy discourse. In other words, in recent years, we can see, at the very least, how there has been an apparent shift away from liberal modes of 'modernist' or 'top-down', 'command-and-control' approaches dominant in western hegemonic practices where forms of regulation were fervently pursued by deeply powerful Western states and international organisation (Grove 2018). The radical promise is that resilient indigeneity and indigenous forms of 'knowledge' and practices which were historically derided, denigrated and ignored hold the key in responding to and/or addressing the developmental problematic of African poor who are excessively exposed to extreme conditions.

Today the prevailing discourse/rhetoric at the top of the policy documents of leading international governmental institutions including notably, but not exclusively, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, United Nations and Development Programmes (UNDP), United Nations (UN), think-tanks and non-governmental organisations is that African reality, experience and attendant frameworks ought to be integrated within the dominant development discourses and rationalities (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019). UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples Rights, for example, gives desirable contexts as well as meaning to development (UN 1993). The World Bank's book, 'The Unbreakable', attempts to re/valorise indigenous people's worldviews and adaptation as a key to unlocking sustainable development. Similarly, UNDP has come to understand the place of indigenous and local perspectives in policy making and interventions; and that indigenous people's particular ways of life offer solutions to the woes of the today's world (UNDP 2011). The question might be asked whether this could be another means towards agency of traditionally marginalised groups in global governance. To me, this is nothing more than a way to institutionalise new forms of appropriation and subjectivities (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019) and to 'ontologize indigeneity' (Chandler and Reid 2020) under the guise of improved and better understanding of African reality. This tendency tends to reify indigenous practices to govern the lives of indigenous peoples enmeshed in complex vulnerable and adaptive systems beyond its control. This article problematises this apparent 'epistemological turn' and questions the rhetoric of indigeneity and indigenous forms of knowledge to describe and analyse the African development problematic.

Romanticisation and fetishisation of dominant discourses of resilient indigeneity in Africa are informed as they are by the rationality of neoliberal forms of resilience rather than celebrating the uniqueness of indigeneity in contemporary critical policy discourse (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019; Chandler and Reid 2016). The current embrace of indigeneity imaginaries is an acknowledgement of the dismal



failure of the modernist episteme to provide comprehensive security. It also explains the shift of responsibility on poorer African populations to cope with their own insecurity, vulnerability, complexity and unpredictability. Thinking with and through the critical frameworks of (David Chandler and Julian Reid, Kelvin Grove and Joseph Jonathan), I contend that discourses and practices of resilient indigeneity and transformations should not be seen as an admiration and appreciation of the superiority of indigenous ways of being (valorising indigeneity) but rather as a new form of 'indigenisation of contemporary neoliberal governmentality' (Chandler and Reid 2018) to re-problematise indigenous Peoples as solely responsible for their own condition.

Of course, it is precisely this shift of 'top-down' governing approaches from traditional liberal framing of more interventionist frameworks (Collier 2017) to the celebration of discourse of indigenous resilience, forms of 'knowledge', reality, experience and practices that resilience thinking is integrated into governance system in Africa. As Chandler and Reid argue, discourse of resilience radically reconceives and reconceptualises development problematic not as political or economic but rather by the abiding conditions of indigeneity and indigenous peoples both as its objects and subjects. It is within the context of strategy of adaptation and endurance to vulnerability, insecurity, complexity, anthropogenic climate change, global warming and recurring economic recessions that discourses of indigeneity and indigenous ways of being are being feted in our contemporary political imagination.

Discussions of a profound shift in thinking concerning liberal interventionist strategies of policy understandings to the so-called radical appreciation and acceptance of the 'knowledge' and practices of indigenous people, reflect how neoliberal forms of resilience facilitate new forms of policy thinking essentially concerned with constructing indigenous subjects that are responsible and self-governing and also new forms of self-policing (Waters 2012). These framings have facilitated new policy practices wherein insecurity, self-reflexivity and self-reflection have increasingly gained new traction and eagerly taken up by powerful governing institutions (Hutter et al. 2014). It is worth noting that most prominent among the proponents of indigenous resilient development as a policy discourse is the World Bank. Increasing the 'resiliency' of indigeneity and indigenous resilient subjects has become a defining goal of the World Bank as a means to link international development efforts to valorisation of adaptation to anthropogenic climate change to rescuing African states from the risks of financial instability and shocks (Hallegatte et al. 2017). Ascription of resilience to discourses of 'indigeneity' and indigenous peoples can be illustrated by examples taken from recent developments in the World Bank policy-making practice and policy discourses.

In the World Bank recent publication, 'The Unbreakable', one encounters recommendations such as indigenous forms of knowledge and adaptation development consistent with entrepreneurial competencies needed to navigate the challenges of financial crisis portended by external shocks. The book describes the perceived abilities of resilient indigenous subject to cope with shocks and adapt to extreme conditions specifically those living in Africa (Hallegatte et al. 2017). The World Bank has lauded the proven track record of resilient indigenous subject perceived ability to adapt permanently to disastrousness and dangers of this world. Indeed



resilience-thinking works to make African poor populations permanently succumb to the strategies of adaptation, vulnerability and complexity rather than resist the conditions of its suffering in the constantly changing world. Resilience thinking argues that achieving long-term broad-based economic growth in the developing world particularly African states is dependent and predicated as it is on radical resilience-based approaches. This, it is argued, has become central to contemporary discourses of neoliberal policy prescriptions for development (Peck et al. 2011). Thus, improving the resilience of the African poor populations requires making the poor into more resilient kinds of subjects through building neoliberal frameworks of economy, albeit without ever becoming fully secured (Springer 2016). Developing the resilience of the African poor feeds upon the constitution of markets and the interpellation of resilient indigenous subjects making them subservient and powerless to the catastrophe of the world. Resilient indigenous subjects therefore need to be strengthened to be self-reliant and to be able to adapt to externally imposed change via the embrace of neoliberal agendas of resilience. This is precisely why the governing doctrines of resilience have become so attractive and appealing to policy makers.

Discourses of resilience are intimately tied to the doctrine of neoliberal policy and governance in ways that profoundly influence our contemporary sense and perception of the world. In this sense, resilience approaches discursively function to constitute resilient subjects amenable to neoliberal practices of governance and discourses. Its rapid circulation throughout the policy world over the last 2 decades offers the possibilities of adaptation, complexity, vulnerability and so on (Welsh 2014). In the framework of resilience discourse, valorisation of adaptation governance for anthropogenic climate change and global warming provides the rationalities according to which neoliberal model of development legitimates itself. Indeed Western policy-makers or international interveners' problematic framing of development is most clearly articulated through promotion of a neoliberal economic reasoning and increasingly prevalent forms of subjectivities. In order to achieve prosperity international development agencies are beginning to recognise the need to craft strategies to strengthen resilience approaches across the full spectrum of programmes and projects via its propagation of the discourses of adaptability. Neoliberal resilience discourses of international development agencies seem to provoke reorientations towards bringing back in the politics and governmental game of 'truth' as a process of construction of subjectivities instrumental for the reproduction of neoliberalism. What matters in neoliberal agendas of resilience is the promise of spontaneously adapting to disturbance in the world of flux and contingency rather than the capacity to secure oneself in the struggle for the possibility of an alternative world (Michael Watts 2019). Indeed the gospel of resilience appears to reinforce and give new dynamism to the promise of transforming the world for the better in the face of inevitable catastrophe, destruction, unprecedented disaster and instability (Muriel 2019).



Afrocentric epistemological alternative to resilience discourse

This section engages with general discussion on Afrocentric perspective. It important to stress that African epistemological constructs, is to be, highly structured by practices of indigenous forms of knowledge of the local peoples of Africa. Let me set out my arguments by delineating the tenets and contours of African epistemological constructs that underpin this paper's assumptions. In espousing the principles of Afrocentric knowledge, I do not overlook the multiple and different forms and appellations of Afrocentricity such as 'Africanity', 'Gloriana Afrocentricity', 'Proletariana Afrocentricity' which should not be confused with variant 'Afrocentrism': one that has been robustly argued for by its leading exponents such as Molefi Kete Asante (2007), Keto Tsehloane (1995) and Mualana Karenga (2006) or any others. Despite differing perspectives on Afrocentric knowledge, they all share the centering of identity, history, social reality and culture of African person in one's analysis and perceptions. It is worth noting that Afrocentric thought is just one of many theoretical traditions that African and Afro-diasporic thinkers have articulated.

Afrocentricity is a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African traditions, historical reality and concepts (Karenga 2006; KetoTsehloane 1989; Asante 2007). The development of Afrocentric paradigm radically ruptures, demystifies and deconstructs hegemonic ways of knowing (Mbembe 2015). In this regard Afrocentricity as a critical emancipatory discourse negates/repudiates exploitations, oppression, repression, domination and marginality of indigenous cultural knowledge. At the core of Afrocentricity is the agenda of democratisation of knowledge, de-hegemonisation of knowledge, de-westernisation of knowledge, and de-Europe-anisation of knowledge (Siba Grovogui 2002). Understood this way, Afrocentricity enables the unmasking of colonising practices of hierarchising knowledge. Afrocentricity that Siba Grovogui (2002) suggests has been the resistance to the dominance to the universal claims of Western knowledge production. In effect, Afrocentric knowledge seeks to question the dominance of the Eurocentric paradigms. Afrocentrists insist that indigenous Afrocentric epistemology properly construed is the struggle to liberate African knowledge from colonising discourses and overpowering blindness of Eurocentrism (Karenga 2006). Afrocentric discourse offers the possibility of a theoretical idea, and one that is embedded conceptually, on distinctive African epistemic identity, ways of being, thinking and acting as an ascendant alternative ways of life. Afrocentric manifesto is predicated as it is on African epistemological constructs, engagements with the land, identity, spirituality, community, local histories, local cultures, social reality, completely and remarkably free from oppressive fundamentalist, teleological certitudes and Eurocentric epistemological matrixes. Without any doubt, Afrocentricity as a world-view is not an attempt to replace Eurocentrism.

Ama Mazama (2004) in her book 'Afrocentric Paradigm' forcefully contends that indigenous Afrocentric epistemology is increasingly focused on the centrality of African enactive agency, adaptations, choices, experiences and initiatives in every conceivable situation where Africans are involved. As clearly demonstrated by Ama Mazama, enactive African agency is at the heart of Afrocentricity. By this she means the re-centering of African person in the center of his or her own reality



and historical context in an enlightened understanding. Enactive agency denotes Africans as actors, agents and participants rather than as marginals on the periphery of political or economic experience. Within the discourse on African indigenous epistemologies, the phenomenon of human knowledge in African thought can be explained in terms of the assumptions and presuppositions suited to the peculiar African historical contexts which guarantees a more accurate and holistic understanding of African realities, knowing and thinking. In fact enactive African agency makes Africa central in their own history and not as an object of European creation (Asante 2007); this provides scenarios wherein we might imagine alternative epistemology to resilience discourses in which we can situate African person as agents and subjects rather than spectators of development. One might claim that enactive African agency within African context provides opportunity to learn appropriate community attitudes and values for sustainable livelihood. The centrality of African enactive agency clearly cuts against resilience discourses and may help in the search for economic growth and sustainable solutions to global challenges such as anthropogenic climate change.

Nkulu-N' Sengha (2005) makes exactly the same observation. He stressed on the centrality of enactive agency discourse as a necessity for recovering, reconstructing and regenerating a uniquely African order of knowledge and social thought: one increasingly characterised by mounting deconstructive criticisms of Western and modernist claims to 'truth'. His work postulated African indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge systems seen as quintessentially African without recourse to immanent teleology or universal application of Western episteme. Zeleza (2005) contends that the fundamental transformations of indigenous Afrocentric epistemology is inconceivable without universalising Africa beyond its Eurocentric provincialisation. This is well captured by Nabudere (2011) arguing that to re-center Africa lies in reconstituting the practices and paradigms of producing indigenous knowledge precisely because it visibly serves to acknowledge some form of separation or rupture to Eurocentric epistemology. Nabudere (2011) quite powerfully suggests that the construction of knowledge in African social and cultural contexts is fundamental to a particular epistemology on which African people inhabit quite different worlds, and how their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing. In this perspective, Hountondji (2009) is also quick to point out that indigenous Afrocentric epistemology in all its dimensions—political, economic, social, and cultural, etc.—is articulated and informed by Africans' own conception and knowledge of reality.

Like many others, I engage the topic of African epistemological constructs with a deep concern about imperial epistemic hierarchy and the continuing marginalisation and inferiorisation of indigenous knowledge systems of the local peoples in the contemporary development discourse and rationalities. In analysing African epistemological constructs in resilience discourse, it is not my intention to essentialise, reify, exoticise and fetishise African indigenous forms of knowledge production, rather an argument is made that in order for resilience-framed governance to become more effective, the international governing institutions need to engage with 'the local' by way of externally enabling their communal capacity in building resilience that fosters sustainable development. The call for



indigenous Afrocentric perspective is part of the trajectory of radically reconceptualising contemporary development discourse and rationality. My analysis of an indigenous Afrocentric perspective is to be understood not as Africa's eternal difference and those of other continents or mythology but as a critical paradigmatic intellectual perspective, thought (standpoint) characterised by epistemological constructs of peoples of African descent. Indigenous Afrocentric epistemological perspective on resilience discourses helps us realise important illuminating insights. In articulating alternative to resilience problematic it would be useful to discuss the idea of Afrocentricity to reconceptualise, re-describe and to critically rethink the ways in which indigenous knowledge, practices and how say local management of ecological processes could be incorporated in resilience problematic.

By the same token, it seems appropriate to frame this discussion in terms of how an indigenous Afrocentric epistemology would strengthen African 'resilience' to anthropogenic climate change, insecurity, economic crisis and what not. Rather than conventional approach to resilience problematic, local forms of knowledge and practices with its social and political dimensions need to be prioritised as the starting point for appropriate resilience interventions. By local forms of knowledge I refer specifically to the epistemic saliency of cultural traditions, values, belief systems and world views. Such indigenous informed African epistemological constructs shape the local peoples direct experience of nature and its relationship with the social world (KetoTsehloane 1989). This article asserts that resilience problematic should be driven and underpinned by African worldviews and epistemologies for it to resonate with the African poor. Understanding and respect for African traditional knowledge systems by Western intervention in Africa (among others) can help bring about a more appropriate resilience interventions.

An enunciation of specifically Afrocentric epistemological alternative to the problematic of resilience would explicitly reconstitute and appreciate re-centering Africa by facilitating local transformative agency with increasing concern with the ownership of intervention. It is important to realise that local participation, the autonomy and agency of the indigenous subjects make them responsive to their external environment. Quite clearly the emerging conceptualisation of Africanising of resilience calls for deeper and a wholesale rethinking of the question of global governance. It is no exaggeration to say that it is particularly the African perspectives, worldview, ways of being and thinking, knowing, character and its attendant conceptual frameworks that urgently necessitates addressing the African development problematic primarily at the African level and precisely in the African context as alternative way of governing. An alternative indigenous Afrocentric epistemology traces its theoretical and intellectual heritage from African knowledge production, practices and worldviews combining as it does with re-centering Africa within contemporary global governance (Nkulu-N'Sengha 2005).

With all this said, however, the theoretical articulations and definitions of Afrocentricity have provoked much controversy and harsh criticisms from African theorists particularly those that degenerate into romanticism, nativism and fundamentalism in intellectual discourse as well as in Africa world. Patricia Collins (1990), for instance, has devastatingly critiqued Afrocentric constructions informed by



mythology as racist and reactionary; and against the most progressive elements of African system of thought. Similarly, Ravitch (1991) suggests that Afrocentric thought borders on racial fundamentalism which perpetuates the very same essentialism that Afrocentric discourse purports to provide a viable alternative epistemological frame. Other critics proclaimed that Afrocentric agenda is based on essentialist presuppositions, faulty argumentation and questionable theoretical orientation that has not been validated by reputable scholars (Lefkowitz 1997). Afrocentric idea of a distinctively African identity Appiah (1993) contends is theoretically, empirically and intellectually weak and reject it as such. To him, the claim of African influence on the West is at best simplistic thinking and at worse a paranoia.

For my purposes, I conceptualise Africanisation of resilience as comprising indigenisation of policies and/or practices, understandings and/or preferences in the domestic arena towards those increasingly advanced in Western episteme and dominant institutions of global governance. This article seeks to unpack an Afrocentric epistemologies for leveraging indigenous knowledge into resilience discourse. In this regard it is the crystallisation of critical perspective on Africa's practices, values and reality to rethink the indigenised African situation beyond Eurocentric knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016). In the broader sense, Afrocentric discourse is entangled with and etched by the fundamental forms of indigenous knowledge sutured/stitched together for de-centering the so-called Eurocentric knowledge and epistemological hegemony (arrogance) particularly in international intervention policy discourse.

The pertinent questions that indigenous Afrocentric epistemological alternative to resilience problematic raise, and for which we need an urgent answer are: what role can indigenous Afrocentric epistemologies play in resilience discourses transplanted or imported onto African soil without reflections to the African conditions and realities? What insight do we gain from applying Afrocentric epistemological perspective? Or what is resilience in an African context? However, answering these questions in the contemporary context calls for developing new and alternative strategies for inclusiveness in resilience thinking. Afrocentric epistemologies offer an important discursive space to undercut resilience discourse as we know it today. I suggest that Afrocentric principles be incorporated into neoliberal resilience discourse, and may create a way of being and thinking congruent with African traditions, histories, cultural experiences, practices and values. Afrocentric resilience in this context calls into question many problematic assumptions of resilience thinking. Resilience strategies grounded in the perspectives and epistemological construct of indigenous peoples is a way of attaining the much-needed epistemic autonomy or move Africa from the margins to the center of development.

Africanising resilience and the implications for African development

In this section advances arguments on what the specifically Afrocentric epistemological alternative to neoliberal resilience discourse would be. That is how Afrocentric knowledge offers alternatives to prevailing policy discourses of resilience. There



are diverse theoretical perspectives that African indigenous traditions have articulated. Because of the varied contexts of African indigenous traditions, no single definition can capture their diversity. Despite the indisputable cultural diversity that arises from Africa's ethnic pluralism, there is nevertheless evidence, both empirical and conceptual, that indicates there are underlying affinities, common or shared features in many areas of the African traditional societies. Africa indigenous practices and thought must be Afrocentric and undertaken from a number of discursive perspectives.

In an era of natural disaster and Anthropocene with its devastating effects on humans and environment, the de-centring of indigenous forms of knowledge offers valuable insights for mitigating sustainable change and building resilience that is culturally appropriate and ecologically renewing. African-centred resilience locates indigenous peoples within their own social, spiritual and cultural frame of reference. Indigenising resilience intrinsically suggests inflected construction of African indigenous practices and forms of knowledge. African indigenous traditions have their own accounts of resilience strategies which enable them to grow their own critical infrastructures and collective agency. Afrocentric knowledge production not only is important for inclusive resilience, but plays a part in promoting alternative Afrocentric ways of knowing and understanding our world. The lineaments and leitmotif of indigenous thought and practices of resilience fundamentally come in the form of many of the adaptive capacity and coping strategies and being resilient. African traditional societies have always coped with changing environments and shocks (economic, ecological or social) in their quest of good life (Nyong et al. 2007). Building on the indigenous knowledge systems rather than financial capital in the policy realm, is a prerequisite for addressing sustainable social and economic development needs of specifically (but not exclusively) African society.

The questions I ask are what does it mean to think of 'Africanising' resilience? How does 'Africanising' resilience mean in practice to African indigenous individuals? What are African indigenous forms of knowledge and practices? How can 'Africanising' resilience facilitates sustainable development? These questions underlie the ontological turn in liberal regimes of international governance policy prescription: of being differently that has provided the basis for the practice of governing doctrines of resilience adept at addressing global challenges (Chandler and Reid 2019). In addition, they also underlie the centrality of conceptualisation and development of indigenous knowledge-production, practices and resilient indigeneity in the contemporary critical policy discourses (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019).

Indigenous coping strategies can significantly reduce vulnerability of people to disaster and hence their survival. Coping capacity and adaptive strategies with traditional methods of natural resource management practices such as the planting of early maturing crops and adoption of hardy varieties of crops help local biodiversity conservation/ preservation, biosphere reserves and its implication for sustainable development model (UNFCCC 1992). The centrality of the production of traditional knowledge to biodiversity conservation and management of resources and its implications for sustainable development at the local level has traditionally been recognised by the Agenda 21 documents of the UN and the International Biodiversity



Convention (UN 2007). Local populations in the Sahel for instance had successfully developed various indigenous coping and adaptive strategies to absorb the shocks of floods which challenge contemporary approaches to resilience (Nyong et al. 2007). These indigenous coping strategies include the placing of barriers around a house, avoidance of construction materials susceptible to cracking during flooding, construction of floating houses, community-based disaster risk reduction and so on. Indigenous practice of knowledge production has been directly applied in the Sahel in climate change mitigation and adaptation through emission reduction and carbon substitution. Indeed in the area of adaptation, local forms of knowledge systems have been applied in weather forecasting, vulnerability assessment and implementation of adaptation strategies. Local forms of knowledge systems like zero tilling practices in cultivation, mulching and other soil management techniques and practices have been applied by local farmers in the Sahel to conserve carbon sequestration in soils. Local farmers in the Sahel largely depend on organic farming which is capable of reducing Green House Gas emissions from anthropogenic sources, and enhancing carbon sink. Similarly, in the south western part of Nigeria, agroforestry practices and techniques have been very effective in dealing with carbon sequestration. Such local community initiatives have been instrumental in re-centering the indigenous ways of being and knowing: one that and in so doing enables alterity to emerge, in a challenge to policy discourses of resilience.

Akan speakers of Ghana indigenous religio-cultural beliefs and practices which are more earth-friendly and consistent with biodiversity, conservation and environmental preservation efforts need to be prioritised as the starting point for sustainable development. Strictly speaking, Akan traditional society taboos ('akyiwade') which means 'forbidden' serves as an appropriate protective mechanisms for regulating the ethical use of the environment with profound implications for biodiversity (Aye-Addo 2013). Embedded in the conceptions of taboos among the Akan speakers of Ghana is primarily to conserve forest than a religious one. Taboos play an important role in the institution of sacred groves because of the belief that such groves/ forest are the abodes of the gods and ancestors and therefore people are prohibited from exploiting these groves (Diawuo and Karim Issifu 2015). It is commonly understood among the Akan traditional society that the sacred grove/forest ('nananom mpow') is a sanctuary which is strictly protected. It is where the ancestral spirits and super-naturals live. It is where the spirits of their ancestors worshiped and therefore must be kept sacred (Owusu 2006). It should be emphasised that ancestral groves and forests among the Akans are regarded as essential natural resource for humanity. In general, then, forbidding members of the community for entering ancestral groves and forests means prioritising conservation of natural resources and sensitive environmental land for humanity, despite increasing threats from modernity.

The environment and natural resources occupy a very high place in Yoruba, Shona, Buganda, Akan, Xhosa, Lua, Mende, Moshe, Walas, Frafra, Dagaabas and Sisaales societies because of their spiritual relationship to the earth and deep respect for it (Apusigah 2007). In many African societies, the mysteries surrounding evil forests, sacred lands and grooves as indicated earlier have contributed in many ways towards the conservation of essential resources and species. In fact it is recognition of the role of forests in climate variability that influenced participants of the Kyoto



Protocol (UN 1997) to allow countries to include carbon sequestered in forests in a country's emission requirements. For indigenous peoples, the ecosystem must be preserved to preserve the cultural practices and these in turn, preserve the ecosystem. Indigenous peoples' practice of knowledge production of the environment and other forest resources can be utilised as a feasible tool for social and economic development while preserving the planet for future generations.

Within the social milieu of the traditional Akan speakers of Ghana, the *Asaase Yaa* which roughly means the spirit of the land; the goddess after whom Thursday is named, according to the Akan day-names and calendar is not just a generous giver and protector of life and livelihoods but it is also a point of spirituality and renewal (Awuah-Nyamekye 2014). Several cults and deities evolve around the Earth Spirit for veneration and protection of the environment. Closely allied to point above is the need to ensure care ethic of Indigenous societies. Indigenous peoples care about each other and importantly care about the means to the care which includes resources, human and material. The idea is that care ethic will require that plants, on which humans depend so much, be viewed as part of the cycle of life; and this reflects plant life as an extension of the cycle of human existence. To this end, indigenous population has initiated effective land management and ecologically sound initiatives and practices to development. These initiatives and practices entail shifting from the traditional notion of using land efficiently to support human needs irrespective of the implications of such use for other beings, to embrace the culture of preservation and conservation more seriously. This has involved burning dead wood, which can be considered as recycling and controlled slash and burn so that new life can begin. African indigenous communities have lived in harmony with the rivers, animals and forests and use them sustainably; and utilised natural resources without impairing nature's capacity to regenerate them (Ofosuhene 2006). This without doubt shows the intrinsic relationship between traditional practices and knowledge-production to land and the natural environment.

African indigenous notions of ownership offer valuable perspectives for sustainability. In the Upper East Region of Ghana, land is considered an embodiment of the existence (i.e. lives and livelihoods) of the people. It could be gainfully said that people appropriation to land by the priest is a duty to the people and gods, the land deity and its spirits. Indigenous population learn the essence of caring values/ethics, adherence to ontological continuity and attitude to traditional natural resource management and conservation which is reflected in some social practices and cultural resources like songs, popular proverbs, common adages, idioms, maxims, phrases, riddles, folktales, etc. (Adu-Gyamfi 2011). I suggest that the maintenance of such social practices and cultural production play a major role in the conservation of natural resources, species and ecosystem, which is essential for appropriate sustainable development. This marks a defining feature of indigenous forms of knowledge that separates it from Western knowledge. These practices and traditional belief systems of the indigenous population bring to the fore the limits of discourses of resilience in the Western episteme.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation projects can learn from the experiences of local population adaptation practices and methods. Adaptation practices are those strategies that enable the indigenous subjects to cope with the impacts of the



climate variability and extremes in the local areas. The traditional practices, cultural knowledge and experiences on global warming and climate change mitigation are increasingly constructed as offering alternative possibilities to policy discourses of resilience. It is not too far-fetched to argue that cultural frameworks of understanding may have positive implications in terms of facilitating and increasing the rate of dissemination and utilisation of climate change mitigation and adaptation options. Local practices and forms of knowledge provide local communities with the capability of dealing with past and present vulnerabilities of vulnerable individuals and groups to say, climate disasters and global ecological catastrophe. African traditional societies learn by experience, experimentation, trial and error, by independent observation of nature and human behaviour, and through voluntary community sharing of information, customs and ritual. In terms of resilience discourse, the inclusion and deliberate interfacing and centering of African indigenous practice of knowledge-production within the development policy thinking will help in addressing African socio-economic challenges. African indigenous ways of knowing, values and knowledge production enable them to conceptualise practically, places and issues in both the local area and beyond their immediate experiences.

The traditional priest among the Frafra community of Ghana performs sacrifices and consultation with ancestral spirits and supernatural rituals on behalf of the community and acted on their behalf on all matters. Among some ethnic groups of the Upper East Region of Ghana the people see themselves, generally, in relationship to others. Communitarian ethos is intimately embedded in indigenous knowledge and values which serve as important force that join individuals to a single body and give them a unique identity. This implies that the household, family, community and the ethnic group ensure the welfare, the common good and interests of each member of society. The communitarian ethos is borne of beliefs about shared value from which all members of the community are expected to draw economic, social, spiritual and political, strength and security. In joy and in grief, the people deferred to and depended on one another for support.

Both the strong and the weak members of the community are taken care of in the face of disaster and stress which is considered supererogatory in Western ethics. The value for and of community in African worldview is encased in a sense of belongingness. African traditional values of belongingness, group unity and social responsibility enables them to identify together and work together to protect the group and individuals. This sense of belongingness enables local populations to act within rules of thumb to maintain security and assurance, or risk isolation from their community. Within African ethical traditions there are certain basic moral norms and ideals to which the conduct of the individual human being, if he is a person, ought to conform. In the world of uncertainty, complexity, stress, strains, insecurity and vulnerability, rules of thumb provide people with a sense of community, belongingness and stability. Rule of thumb is considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and cooperative living. Surely, that it would be correct to assert that indigenous ways of life and worldviews have demonstrated utmost understanding of the need to promote the sustainable exploration of resources and even engineer solutions to environment challenges long before the menace appeared.



For me, what characterises an alternative forms and sources of indigenous knowledge production for addressing African ‘resilience’ is at the level of organic local practices of learning, adaptation and understandings rather than claims of centralising grand narratives of liberal internationalism. Agent-orientated African ‘resilience’ enables indigenous individuals to make effective choices according to their own values thereby increasing their capabilities and building on their own coping strategies to live with insecurity, complexity, vulnerability, etc. A deep understanding of the form and content of indigenous knowledge rupture the traditional liberal framing which seeks to problematise liberal approaches to intervention. Afrocentric epistemological alternative to the problematic of resilience would work with rather than against homeopathic forms of policy intervention. It is also rooted in and stems from holistic, systemic interventions which predominantly assert ‘bottom-up’ decision making and intervention reaffirming contexts, plus ways of knowing of the poorest and most marginalised. Indigenous African ‘voices’ to the problematic of resilience constitute another critical content because they have a ‘deeper’ and a ‘better’ understanding of their own social and ecological problems rather than the understanding of Western advocates. Indigenous knowledge system is a prerequisite in designing relevant and appropriate resilience interventions.

The World Bank’s recent policy directive on indigenous peoples highlights the ‘informed participation’ in Bank projects, as well as design of indigenous peoples’ development (World Bank 2016). Context specific resilience intervention constructs indigenous subjects as being the key agency of transformation and change in implementing an Afrocentric resilience. Indigenous Afrocentric epistemologies to the problematic of resilience facilitated through an empowerment of decentralised local agential capacities enables subjects of intervention to police themselves in terms of managing their own risks and security challenges. Indigenising the problematic of resilience focused on the unique local and organic processes at work in societies that bear the brunt of resilience strategies would be sufficient and useful to coping mechanisms in Africa societies (Sumida 2019). Here the focus therefore shifts away from Western or modernist forms of knowledge and universal solutions (supply-driven policy making) and instead rearticulates and reconceptualise the problematic of resilience in terms of local actors own capacities and capabilities to manage processes essential in directly addressing stress, strains, insecurity, vulnerability and survival strategies of the African poor.

Afrocentric resilience interventions grounded in decentralised coping strategies/ integration of indigenous knowledge systems, practices and self-policing are more effective and engender sustainable solutions. In a sense, strategy of adaptation of indigenous individuals would increase their ‘resilience’. Active cooperation and participation of indigenous individuals at the top of the international policy agenda would mark a radical departure from the modernist linear cause-and-effect models prevalent in disciplinary governance interventions. Afrocentric epistemological alternative to resilience focuses on empowering and building the capacity of indigenous subjects. Practices and discourses of empowerment and local ownership of the indigenous subject facilitate resilience interventions aimed at reinterpreting the intervention problematic.



African-orientated resilience understandings decentre prevailing discourses of epistemic hegemony and explicitly relocates the indigenous subjects within governance intervention framework. This framework would ensure an increasingly pragmatic and internally generated capacity for self-regulation or the self-policing which is no longer amenable to external policy solutions. The problematic of resilience discourse well-founded on Africa realities, worldview and practices forces the inclusion of grassroots perspective that promotes an autonomous, self-reliant process of knowledge production that address problems and issues directly or indirectly posed by African populations. Here, it is suggested that international governance interventions intimate knowledge of the dynamic values of African enactive agency premised on greater adaptation to local context and deeply immersed in African prevalent situation increasingly serve as a countervailing affirmations of remaking our shared world anew (Philip 2010).

The quest for African values and agency within the framework of resilience interventions would mean the valorisation of an African ascendant alternative that would make interventions more contextually relevant (Kruger et al. 2019). This framing is required to foster an intervention processes that meet existential challenges of subjects of intervention. In this framing, subjects of intervention would be better able to problematise and analyse their social dynamics in order to provide solutions to their own problems rather than relying on ready-made international policy solutions from the outside. Afrocentric epistemological alternative to resilience problematic more broadly would recognise indigenous individuals as both the object and the subject of intervention strategies that are deeply grounded in holistic engagement with society as a collective set of processes, interactions and inter-relations.

Such an approach pays needed attention to the particular policy context connected to institutions, values, practices and knowledge systems. Specifically Afrocentric epistemological alternative to resilience problematic is participatory, in that resilience intervention emerges from the 'bottom up' rather than from the 'top down'. Afrocentric resilience intervention would fundamentally seek to enhance the capacity of the indigenous individuals to participate in the process that shapes resilience strategies. This framework of resilience governance embraces and acknowledges indigenous individuals as primary stakeholders rather than the butt of external policy intervention. This would effectively serve as a key avenue to actively participate in determining the ends to which approaches and intervention strategies are dedicated which is a shift in attention from centralised knowledge and expertise of external policy interveners. Under these kind of epistemologies, indigenous individual becomes an active agenda setter for approaches and intervention strategies rather than just a passive recipient and consumer of resilience intervention strategies.

Universalist framework that assumed that powerful Western states and international governing institutions had all the knowledge necessary to fix all problems should give way to new forms and sources of alternative epistemologies. The mechanistic romanticisation of liberal Western governance interventions has tended to exaggerate the incapacity of non-Western regimes. Resilience governance understandings, I contend is reductionist in the sense that it ignores the fact that vulnerability, stress and insecurity manifest themselves differently in different contexts making any external measure highly counter-productive. Western modernist



understandings and assumptions of knowledge cannot be context free and universally valid (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016; Asante 2007). I suggest that the nature of social and political processes in Africa is radically different, hence the need to revisit the underpinnings of Afrocentric epistemology sensitive to the plight and predicament of ordinary/vulnerable African populations. Afrocentric epistemology would challenge the knowledge assumptions underpinning mechanistic and reductionist views of resilience discourses. Quick fix and mechanistic assumptions associated with problematic of resilience should understand the endogenous causal processes situated within African practices and, even more importantly knowledge production. African-orientated resilience functions to make resilience interventions much more responsive to the pressing needs and problems of Indigenous individuals, and in the process, encourages more critical perspectives in African societies (Nabudere 2011).

The obvious result is that Africa would take charge of her adaptive and coping strategies on its own right and on its own terms. Critical re-appropriation of Africa's own indigenous Afrocentric epistemological to resilience would be potentially more enabling seed of resistance and the impetus of reclamation, and thus her potential to dismantle resilience 'gospel' as we know it today. Indigenous individuals would take charge of the politics of everyday life as well as allow for a building of a genuine resilience strategies that is adequately in tune with their predicament, priorities, concerns and plight. Indigenising the resilience problematic is viewed as re-centering, reclaiming and re-valorisation of African forms of knowledge production; a precondition necessary for redefining her own (in) security, vulnerability and increasingly anthropogenic climate change, etc. Understood in this sense, there is the urgent need to reclaim our collective agency to counter and indict resilience problematic to be able to cope in these difficult times (Zambakari 2011). For me there is an intricate connections between the development of African indigenous forms of knowledge production, conditioned for, enmeshed within, and derived from African ways of knowing and being in the crisis-driven resilience approach to governance. The exigent and disciplinary logics of neoliberal discourse of resilience forces us to abandon our imaginings of and desires for alternative futures. African knowledge production constitutes the critical juncture through which reclamations and reconstructions of Africa centred knowledge can escape from the epistemological traps of Eurocentrism and European epistemic fantasies (Zezeza 2005) so deeply entrenched in resilience 'gospel'. International governing institutions notably the IMF and the World Bank concerned with indigenous politics in Africa need as a matter of urgency liberate/purge themselves from the problematic centralising and hierarchical knowledge assumptions.

Indigenous Afrocentric epistemologies offer us a window of an opportunity to escape resilience discourses universalistic pretensions and universalising propensities. I dare say that resilience discourse would fail like any other intervention policies implemented in Africa if it is not hinged on 'problematics,' that respond to issues that are first and foremost important to Africans and socially constructed in their own experience and world view. Additionally, Afrocentric epistemological alternative would open up new analytical possibilities as well as conceptual categories that recast and restore Africa's presence within the landscape of contemporary critical policy discourses. It points to the emergence of new forms of emancipatory



politics breaking with the ‘top-down’ understandings of interventionism and Eurocentric provincialisation. Explicit or implicit in this account is the assumption that the future of resilience ‘gospel’ in Africa can only be hopeful through indigenisation and domestication rather than exogenously induced policies as a guiding principle. The discursive contours of resilience thinking must engage in a meaningful dialogue with the specificities of African context in terms of perspectives and contents, which is especially critical at this juncture as the resilience discourse seeks to build more productive and inclusive interventions. *In fine*: a genuine appreciation of the knowledge of indigenous peoples in the decision-making and development may be an important step towards building African resilience.

Concluding thoughts

This paper has sought to reveal resilience thinking as an instance of contemporary forms of governmentality constitutive of processes for the production of neoliberal resilient subjects capable of adapting to natural exigencies of life in today’s world. I have clarified and interrogated the nature of the problematic epistemological framing prevalent in the contemporary critical policy discourse particularly by linking this problematic framing to the understandings of global governance. I have claimed that in as much as resilience thinking can vitally be grasped as the construction of new forms of governing behaviour and a regime of subjectification that have been deployed to govern the neoliberal (globalisation) crisis of the African states, it is also epistemological. The point to stress here is that it is not the case that discourses of ‘indigeneity’ and ‘indigenous’ ways of being and thinking are feted: it is rather that global neoliberal crises in African states are seen to evade the grasp of deeply powerful western global institutions. I am thus suggesting that ascriptions of indigenous resilience and adaptability far from privileging indigenous forms of ‘knowledge’ in development rationality are disempowering and depoliticising to the extreme. I have analysed resilience discourse as a way to see what kind of rationality of governance is constructed in our contemporary political imaginary.

Seen through a governmentality lens, the kind of governance that is constructed is constitutive of the processes geared towards disciplining of the indigenous peoples. Resilience rationalities of adaptability, vulnerability, complexity, anthropogenic climate change, global warming, etc., have been deployed to govern the neoliberal crisis of the African states and as Foucault might say, to discursively produce new forms of resilient subjects. Foucauldian governmentality has been useful in shedding some useful insights on how resilience discourse contributes to a more complex understanding of liberal global governance in regards to Africa (Foucault 2010). Resilience discourse is the calling card for new forms of powerful and dangerous governance cliché; and these new forms of powerful and dangerous governance cliché it suggested are seen to be dictated and embedded in the way in which it functions to construct indigenous subjects with the capacity to adapt to danger and catastrophes of this world permanently and endlessly and never dare challenge or stop. I have shown how resilience approaches



rearticulate, reframe and recast liberal modernist understandings of interventionist policy-making in terms of individual responsibility, reflexivity, and reification of the outcomes of market relations typified by neoliberal regimes.

For one thing, the appeal and the seduction for resilience thinking lies in its deceitful, emancipatory and redemptive posturing that forces us to accept the inevitability of the liberal politics of catastrophe and disastrousness. As a deceitful political project, the policy discourses of resilience is deeply grounded in coping strategies and learning to live permanently in crisis without the possibility of resistance. This therefore inspires us—in fact requires us—to embrace our infinite endangerment with the collapse of the political imaginary rather than transforming the world for the better or re-imagining the structures and the condition of possibility for our current ways of being and acting. It is submitted that in order for indigenous peoples to overcome our contemporary problematic there is the need to develop new forms of collective struggle against the world, and have the courage to imagine other forms of life and security, audacious poetic autonomy and exploration of subjective agency. Resilience, I want to argue, is a dangerous concept that must be resisted by questioning its ‘truth’, power, and subjectivity.

Given that the neoliberal crisis of the West has not abated, the only insurance of Africa states will be to formalise its own ontology of resilience strategies to insulate its populations from external pressures of disruption, uncertainty and economic crisis rather than rely on the standard market episteme of the development project. Africa must re-imagine the politics of being (the ethics of ontopolitics): the need to engage in the politics of critique by constituting political subjects capable of speaking back to neoliberal domination in order to de-subjugate itself from particular regimes of ‘truth’. Essentially, it is the ontopolitics of being: that is sensing, envisaging and forging an alternative possibilities to the present. And that is the remedy that Afrocentricity suggests.

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