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Neoliberal Governmentality, Corporate Responsibility, and the Governing
of Citizens in Nigeria: The case of ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron

by

Anna Zawada

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Sociology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
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2010

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AUTHOR`S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how oil corporations in Nigeria govern citizens through the implementation of certain corporate responsibility initiatives. The examination of ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron, and how each corporation governs individuals through various capacity-building initiatives will be discussed. From a governmentality perspective, this thesis examines how, under neoliberalism, private actors utilize certain governance “techniques” that render individuals to be responsible and self-sufficient. By focussing on the “responsibilization” of Nigerian citizens, the oil corporations have minimized their own responsibility to respect the environment, life-styles, forms of subsistence and human rights of the population effected by their oil explorations. This thesis concludes that the various capacity-building projects undertaken by ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron in order to govern Nigerian citizens, with their focus on building self-sufficiency and responsibility, have been indicative of the shifting power relations within the modern era of governance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

During the last few decades, changes pertaining to governance structures have become increasingly visible within developing countries due to a shift towards more economically driven neoliberal policies. As part of this shift, issues pertaining to corporate responsibility, governance of individuals, self-regulation, and de-regulation have surfaced as part of the neoliberal agenda and have become part of the process of which “responsibility” has become the most prominent feature pertaining to neoliberal policies in developing countries. As a result of de-regulation, numerous private actors such as oil corporations, are now regulating their own economic performance as well as governing individuals.

Although the vast majority of corporate responsibility initiatives put forth by private actors in other regions can be seen in relation to de-regulation, the oil industry in Nigeria had been regulated to a much lesser degree, thus leading oil corporations to adopt corporate initiatives not as a response to deregulation but as a way of addressing consumer concerns. The widespread use of corporate responsibility by oil corporations has been in response to criticisms launched by numerous NGOs and Human Rights Groups concerning the effect of the corporations’ business practices on the environment and people. In this thesis, I will discuss corporate responsibility initiatives adopted by three private oil corporations in Nigeria - ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron. I will argue that these policies have been put in place as a response to widespread criticisms

launched at these corporations by various human rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International and Corp Watch. Concerned about their reputation and how it would affect consumers, the oil corporations attempt to “white-wash” their image by putting forward corporate responsibility policies and initiatives. This thesis focuses on Nigeria. However, it should be noted that each oil corporation discussed in this thesis has used corporate responsibility initiatives in various regions of the world in order to appear “responsible.”

Some scholars have examined corporate social responsibility policies as a form of self-regulation and as a policy aimed to win consumers’ support (Monshipouri, Welch Jr, & Kennedy, 2003, p. 979). In addition to being used as a public relations tool and as a form of self-regulation, corporate responsibility policies have also been examined as being forms of influence geared towards developing countries on the issues of environmental and sustainable development (Clapp, 2005, p. 23). In this thesis, I go beyond these arguments. I will argue that in line with neoliberal government practices, private corporations are engaged in disciplining and regulating the conduct of citizens. I will illustrate how ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron use certain capacity-building initiatives, under the guise of being “responsible” and fostering development through these initiatives, to govern citizens in accordance with neoliberal ideals.

I have situated my research within a neoliberal governmentality framework, and particular the concepts of self-government and responsibility as political objectives aligned with neoliberal forms of governance. From this perspective, I will illustrate how

private oil corporations through their corporate responsibility initiatives shape the conduct and autonomy of citizens. I will also argue that by making local citizens responsible for managing their own risks, private oil corporations minimize their own responsibility to respect the environment, life-styles, forms of subsistence and human rights of the population affected by their oil explorations.

My thesis will make a contribution to the literature on corporate responsibility. The vast majority of current literature pertaining to corporate responsibility has focused on policies and initiatives adopted by private corporations as a way of improving the corporation's image on issues relating to environmental, human rights, and developmental matters (Clapp, 2005, p. 23). Some researchers have examined corporate social responsibility initiatives as a way through which the states "govern at a distance" (Gray, 2006, p. 876). While corporate social responsibility policies have been extensively studied within governmentality studies, I believe I contribute to this literature by studying corporate responsibility from a different angle, by examining corporate responsibility programs as a form of neoliberal governance and exploring the way these corporations govern citizens in line with neoliberal priorities.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I have situated my research pertaining to the governance of citizens through social responsibility practices and initiatives put forward by oil corporations in Nigeria within a governmentality framework focussing in particular on how the notions of governance have shifted and on how citizens have been governed and shaped in line with neoliberal

rationalities of government. Furthermore, I intend to demonstrate how Nigerian citizens have come to be “responsibilized” through various capacity-building initiatives put forth by oil corporations.

The concept of government is critical within governmentality studies. It has been applied to contemporary issues within sociological studies, such as governance and responsibility. According to Gordon (1991), Michel Foucault understood and defined government as “the conduct of conduct” in which government became an “activity” that aimed to shape or govern the conduct and behaviour of people (Gordon, 1991, p. 2). Foucault was the first to coin the term “rationality of government” to reflect a way of thinking about the practice of government, essentially the issues of who can govern and what can be governed, and what or who is governed (p. 3). The “rationality of government” reflects how governance as a system is exercised over society and institutions and how those actors who are being governed react to being governed (p. 3). Furthermore, the questions of the “rationality of government” have gained increasing importance as governmental practices change from what Foucault referred to as the “traditional conduct of conduct” (with the state maintaining complete power and control) to “modern” forms of government rationalities (p. 3).

The “modern” forms of government rationalities have, according to Gupta & Ferguson (2002) become transcended into forms of “transnational governmentality” where forms of government are now being exercised on a global scale (p. 990). For Gupta & Ferguson, governance under neoliberalism has come to encompass the new

strategies of “discipline and regulation” as well as “transnational alliances” between organizations (p. 990). The key feature within transnational governmentality has been the “outsourcing” of certain functions previously held by the state to various organizations as well as other “non-state agencies” (p. 990).

The processes of globalization have rendered it necessary for governmentality scholars to expand the framework pertaining to these processes and how they have come to affect modern forms of government. Walters (2004), for instance, argues that in the face of globalization, it has become necessary to explore the governmentalization of the “space between, above, or across the system of states” (p. 155). The governmentalization of these places is directly applicable to my thesis research as the transformation of power needs to be looked at as going “beyond” the state. I will examine, more specifically, the role of transnational oil corporations in governing individuals within Nigeria’s borders. Walters uses the European Union (EU) as his focal point in calling for this political formation to be dissected by governmentality theory through interrogation of “particular subjects, objects, arts, and spaces” that have brought the EU and other unique political forms into existence (p. 156). Walters’ focal point is garnered towards understanding modern forms of government at the level of mentalities and rationalities of government through what Nikolas Rose (1999) terms to be “empiricism of the surface” where concerns lie with identifying the differences in “what is said, how it is said, and what allows it to be said and to have an effectivity” (p. 57). Below I will examine documents produced by three oil corporations in Nigeria as

statements about the qualities they believe Nigerian citizens should have (e.g. competitiveness, self-reliance, and others).

Under neoliberalism, the relationship between the state and economy has been redefined (Lemke, 2001, p. 200). This redefinition framed within neoliberalism has meant that the state no longer defines and monitors the market, the market is now the controlling force behind the economy and it is the state which is being supervised and governed by the market (p. 200). The market now serves as the “organizational principle” for state and society (p. 200). Also part of the neoliberal agenda has been a degree of withdrawal of the state which now encompasses restructuring of government techniques calling for more “personal responsibility” and “self care” of not only individuals but also institutions and corporations who are told to be “autonomous” (Lemke, 2001, p. 203). The new role of private institutions has become one that has arisen due to the “re-coding of social mechanisms” pertaining to exploitation and control over the “new topography” of societal relations (p. 203).

Neoliberal governance has produced various definitions of what it means to govern in this era, and in this sense, government has gone beyond the traditional forms of governance and has come to represent the construction of “quasi” and “artificial” forms of governance centred around the market and private agencies (Dean, 1999, p. 149). According to Rose and Miller (1992) the discourse of politics pertaining to neoliberal governmentality should be seen as simply coming in alignment with modern “technologies of government” (p. 199). Distances between the state and formal

institutions are rendered to be part of a device to foster autonomy and self-rule to these institutions (p. 199). These techniques have become part of the political rule, and have become “reorganized programmes of government” in which the state, through its alignment with private actors, has introduced certain measures that are to gear individuals towards self-advancement (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 201). Rose and Miller advance their point by stating that it is directly through these various techniques of re-organized programs of government that individuals have come to be governed by (p. 201). In this thesis, certain techniques of government and how they have come to be applied to individuals by three oil corporations in Nigeria will be highlighted in order to demonstrate how Nigerian citizens are governed.

Ong (2006) argues that under advanced forms of government, two types of technologies have been introduced to govern citizens (p. 6). The first type of technique is characterized as being the “technologies of subjectivity” under which knowledge and “expert systems” are used as a catalyst to fuel “self-government” and “self-animation” to enable citizens to maximize their choices pertaining to market conditions (p. 6). The second type of technique is termed to be “technologies of subjection” which involve different “political strategies” that have the potential to optimize productivity (p. 6). Ong further asserts that the “technologies of self-governing” under neoliberalism have constructed political spaces that have become governed in an entirely new fashion and have become interconnected globally (p. 9). In my thesis I will examine these “technologies of self-governing” aimed to make Nigerian citizens more productive.

The neoliberal governmentality literature has increasingly focussed on the issue of “capacity-building” as a form of governance within the modern governmental era (Phillips and Ilcan, 2004, p. 397). Capacity-building has become a key technology of governance towards individuals by non-state actors. According to Phillips and Ilcan, governance within neoliberalism finds it necessary to focus on fostering policies and techniques that result in various “capacity-building arrangements” that achieve the desired results under advanced liberalism (p. 397). Furthermore, Phillips and Ilcan assert that the “capacity to be responsible” can only be achieved through production and dissemination of “market-based partnerships” which are part of the process of the “knowledge economy of capacity- building” (p. 397). The “knowledge economy of capacity-building” refers to various techniques such as the acquisition of skills and knowledge and training programs as part of a device to foster new communal relations (p. 397). Phillips and Ilcan further argue that the formed relations pertaining to capacity-building have created a new “relationship between knowledge and responsibility” within a social and economically driven society which has further resulted in the responsibility being shifted on individuals and organizations to become “self-regulating, responsible, and market-knowledgeable” (p. 397). Looking within a framework of neoliberal governance, these newly formed relationships have also led to the implementation of “patterns of governance” in which formed relationships which were once perceived as being “unequal” have now become redefined as “partnerships” in an effort to build the responsible and self-sufficient citizens (p. 398). The focus on the newly formed “relationships” between the state, NGOs, and the private oil corporations

in Nigeria will be addressed and the way the relationships have come to be seen as “partnerships” between the actors will be showcased through the examination of specific initiatives undertaken by each of the oil companies under study

Under neoliberalism, issues pertaining to governance and the responsibilities of individuals have emerged as a critical point in governmentality studies. According to Brodie (2007), governance within neoliberalism now requires the government to repeal itself by “constructing and disciplining self-governing and self-sufficient individuals” who along with institutions are further rewarded for enacting the “market values” and social action visions of neoliberal policies (p. 100). Brodie introduces “individualization” as a critical aspect within neoliberal governance, and argues that the concept is designed specifically to transform citizens into productive and “self-sufficient market actors” who are rendered responsible for their own needs and the needs of their families (p. 103). The responsibility pertaining to the “social crises”, formerly identified as being the state’s responsibility has now been shifted onto individuals who have only themselves to blame for their failure in adapting to the processes of globalization (p. 103).

Dean (1999) advances the argument that the “responsibilization” of individuals under advanced liberalism has been taking place, under which individuals are made responsible for their own choices pertaining to their lifestyle (p. 166). He states that “technologies of citizenship”, which he asserts are various “techniques” pertaining to empowerment and community development have allowed individuals to see themselves as being “responsible consumers” and being able to self-manage (p. 168). Dean

maintains that these “techniques” have become used to target certain parts of the population by the “strategic purposes” of modern governments who utilize certain programs for their own benefit (p. 168).

According to Lemke (2001), since the “rationality of government” has now shifted, it has become the rational action of individuals, forming an “artificially” shaped form of conduct (p. 200). “Artificially created behaviours,” such as entrepreneurship and possessing a competitive nature, are recognized and accepted as the individual becomes economic-rational (p. 200). The shift in the “rationality of government” and the transformation of individuals towards becoming more economically minded through corporate responsibility initiatives launched by oil corporations in Nigeria will be examined later in my thesis.

I will situate my thesis within the governmental framework and particularly the discussion of the “responsibilization” of citizens under modern governance as discussed by various theorists, such as Nikolas Rose, Mitchell Dean, and Janine Brodie. I will demonstrate how Shell, Chevron, and ExxonMobil involve themselves in certain projects that the corporations claim as reflective of their commitment to ethical and socially responsible practices. However, as I will argue, these initiatives “empower” individuals by rendering them “responsible” for their own livelihoods, and therefore they can be seen as a form of neoliberal governance.

III. METHODOLOGY

For this thesis, I analyzed a number of documents pertaining to the issues of corporate responsibility and governance in Nigeria by Chevron, Shell, and ExxonMobil with further documentation provided by human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and CorpWatch. This type of qualitative methodology is explained by such researchers as Fairclough (2000 and 2003), Denzin (2007), and Prior (2008).

Fairclough (2003) argues that analysing text based on language requires the researcher to look at the text within the framework of contemporary social change and its processes, such as globalization and “new capitalism” which, he states, have a vast impact on all areas of social life, including politics and research (p. 4). Fairclough puts forward an argument that it is necessary to analyze text by looking at the causal effects that the text could potentially have, such as bringing about changes in “people, beliefs, attitudes, actions, and social relations”(p. 8). Using this method of qualitative analysis has been necessary for my research because I have examined a multitude of reports, and policy statements produced by Shell, Chevron, and Exxon Mobil. Furthermore, it has become crucial for me to analyse these documents according to what Fairclough (2000) terms to be a framework founded upon a new network of social practices and relationships because this has allowed me to examine the documents and search for specific language and wording that can be analyzed as belonging to a new genre of change, such as new practices and methods of governance, education, and new shifts in power relations (p. 148). I have been able to analyze not just the content and specific

language within them, but also, the emphasis on the functions and relationships the documents share with each other within the bigger picture of contemporary social change and governance, in this case governance of an advanced liberal form.

As discussed below, the documents that I analyzed do in fact represent a “new” genre of change. More specifically, they illustrate how the oil corporations have used community-building initiatives as part of their governing process of the individuals who reside in the Nigerian communities in hopes of transforming them into competitive and self-regulating citizens. While Fairclough argues for text analysis based upon contemporary social change, Denzin (2007) takes this argument one-step further and asks us to take a look at political correctness and ethics when conducting research and analysis (p. 101). Denzin argues that we as researchers must ask ourselves specific questions before we conduct our research and after and he terms this to be questions of the “politics of truth” (p. 101). Important questions to ask should include “What is truth?”, “What is evidence? ”, “How can evidence or facts be “fixed” to fit policy, which he determines are necessary in “times such as this” emphasizing a modern governance era where the governmental re-structuring of relationships and networks are present (p. 101).

I have also felt that taking a reflexive approach towards my document analysis has greatly assisted me during the course of my research. Taking a reflexive approach to document analysis, according to Prior (2008) should involve examining the functions of these documents and not just the content, which would give the researcher the ability

to view these documents as “active agents” of the world and as key elements of a network (p. 821). Using Prior’s method for qualitative analysis of documents has been of great importance to my research because it has encouraged me to focus on how these documents are socially organized and how they interact with one another (p. 822). Examining the corporate responsibility reports and statements, such as ExxonMobil’s *2008 Corporate Citizenship Report* and Chevron’s yearly *Corporate Responsibility Reports* on the issues of human rights, environmental matters, and corporate ethics has allowed me to see how each of these reports has become part of the re-structuring of relations within society as part of neoliberal governance. Examining these documents has led me to focus on the corporate initiatives that each corporation has implemented and how these initiatives relate to each other in terms of governance techniques pertaining to Nigerian citizens.

IV. OIL CORPORATIONS AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN NIGERIA

In recent years, much attention has been focused on the oil corporations and their operations in Nigeria and other developing countries and the growing discontent that has accompanied these operations (Watts, 2004, p. 51). More specifically, critics of corporate globalization have shifted their focus onto the ethics and corporate responsibility practices of these corporations who have been criticized for their operations and the effects that these operations have had on the people and the environment.

The drastic rise of multinational corporations in developing nations grew enormously once the Cold War had ended and resulted in corporations maintaining dominance over world affairs, and with this newfound role, the rumblings of concept of "corporate social responsibility" began to emerge (Spector, 2008, p. 317). Spector (2008) argues that it was after the Cold War that corporations began to be seen as setting the "standards for the way of life and the mode of living for our citizens" with further emphasis on promoting and maintaining a "special responsibility" in order to "serve interests beyond shareholders and bottom line profits" (p. 317-318). Spector asserts that the debate over what constitutes "corporate responsibility" came to represent ideological assumptions rooted within the Cold War, hence "corporate responsibility" and the promotion of "goodness" began to be seen as a Cold War construct (p. 318). The fights against global communism came to light in the form of corporations adapting the notion and view that by spreading their operations to "underserved" regions of the globe and by fostering development, than they could proclaim themselves to be "agents of worldwide benefit" (p. 319).

The notion of "corporate responsibility" and what it entailed began to change as free market capitalism began to dominate the economic sphere in developing nations. This signalled an acceptance of the market ideologies by developed nations (Hawley & Williams, 2005, p. 1996). Hawley & Williams discuss how the concept of "corporate responsibility" on the part of corporations operating in developing countries became associated with "sustainability-governance issues" (p. 1995). This shift is the result of stakeholder pressures on these corporations and pressure from NGOs that demanded

that corporations change their corporate policies in regards to certain issues such as the environment, human rights, and sustainability (p. 1995). Hawley & Williams assert that the rise and dominance of corporations is a sign of “fiduciary capitalism” in which corporations have become heavily influenced by shareholders on various responsibility issues which coincides with the evolution of the “corporate responsibility” concept to include more forms of responsibility measures (p. 1995).

Conrad (2004) argues that the concept of “corporate responsibility” experienced a strong resurgence in recent years due to political pressures stemming from a multitude of scandals pertaining to corporate business institutions such as Enron, WorldCom, and Global Crossing (p. 312). Known as the “corporate meltdown”, ethical business operations and standards by corporations were once more thrust onto the agenda this time in hopes that these events would lead to drastic changes in corporate governance and ethics (p. 312).

The call for drastic change in governance pertaining to corporate activities has also drastically influenced oil corporations operating in Nigeria and promoted “corporate responsibility” as a concept that has become deeply seated within Nigerian society. The presence of oil corporations in Nigeria can be traced back to the time preceding Nigeria’s independence from Britain, with the first sign of exploration dating back to 1937 (White & Taylor, 2001, p. 333). White & Taylor (2001) note that the Shell oil corporation was the first to be granted “exclusive exploration and prospecting rights” that would eventually lead to the debate surrounding the governance and control of oil

within multinational corporations (p. 333). After independence, according to White & Taylor, Nigeria continued to exert little control over its oil industry (p. 333). The Nigerian state's involvement with oil exploration was limited strictly to obtaining rents, taxes, and royalties derived from the operations by the oil corporations (p. 333). The history of Nigerian state's relationship with the oil corporations experienced a shift in the 1970s when it attempted to nationalize the oil sector. However this attempt was met with limited success because the corporations held excessive power within the economic realm, even to the extent that two-thirds of multinational corporations in partnership with the government "retained effective control over their operations" (p. 333). Yet, completely unregulated by the Nigerian state, oil companies engaged in various environmental and human rights abuses, as illustrated by numerous human rights and non-governmental organizations.

According to NGO documents, Shell has been involved in serious human rights and environmental abuses in Nigeria. Shell's past volatile relationship with the Ogoni community in the Delta traces back to the 1995 incident where the corporation was alleged to have been involved in the execution of the "Ogoni eight", which resulted in the case *Wiwa v. Royal Dutch Petroleum*, filed on behalf of the victim's families (Justice In Nigeria Now, 2010). The *Wiwa* case filed in 1996, was finally resolved in June 2009 after Shell agreed to a settlement of \$15.5 million dollars as part of a "humanitarian gesture" towards the Ogoni people but has not admitted any wrongdoing in the Ogoni incident (Shell, 2009).

Amnesty International cites the case of the Batan state oil spill in 2002 in which Shell wrote to the Governor claiming that the spill was the result of sabotage. However, the letter written by Shell was done two days before the oil spill investigation was carried out. Shell's statements were scrutinized by local organizations when video footage and follow up reports contradicted Shell's claims (Amnesty International, 2009). The above cases are only a fraction of the incidents that the NGOs and Human Rights Groups claim are occurring quite commonly in Nigeria with the oil corporations being linked to these and other cases of abuses.

According to Amao (2008), the concept of "corporate responsibility" and what it constitutes has gradually increased in importance in recent years in Nigeria due to the hostile relationship between the corporations, the citizens and the government which can be traced back to before Nigeria's independence (p. 81). The promotion of "corporate responsibility" stayed on the backburner in Nigeria until oil corporations, concerned with their images and reputations began to adopt "voluntary" corporate responsibility practices that sought to serve the needs of the people in Nigeria by proclaiming themselves to be the face of change and development (p. 91). Amao further argues that the promotion of corporate responsibility through the implementation of "voluntary" responsibility policies has taken place within the last number of year due to the corporations being criticized by the local population and organizations for the effects of their operations on the environment (p. 81). Yet, despite the implementation of these corporate responsibility policies, the lack of enforcement and accountability on the part of the corporations can be attributed to the Nigerian state infrastructure (p. 87). Many

of the provisions and frameworks pertaining to corporate responsibility have been undertaken during repressive and corrupt authoritarian regimes that largely focused on the public sector despite the drastic rise of the private sector (p. 87).

The perceived ineffectiveness of corporate responsibility policies in Nigeria can be attributed to the weakness of the Nigerian state, which Lewis (1999) argues is directly the result of Nigeria's colonial history, with Nigeria being seen as an "artificial creation" (p. 142). Lewis further argues that Nigeria's weak state structure can be explained by looking at Nigeria's vast cultural landscape, exemplified after Nigeria's independence which saw extreme ethnic tensions arise once the issues of resource allocation and political power became prominent (p. 142). Lewis goes on to state that ethnic divisions within Nigeria, coupled with the fact that Nigeria relies on its oil sector as the main source of the state's revenue has resulted in the Nigerian state becoming weaker due to the hostility between the vast ethnic groups and the scramble for political power to gain access to the spoils of the oil sector (p. 142). Nigeria's status as a rentier state turned it into a source of competition and influence, however compared to other models of economic and democratic transition, Nigeria has experienced adjustment problems to a more severe degree (p. 142). Nigeria's weak governmental structure and the ineffectiveness of current regulations and policies pertaining to the private sector have made it possible for the oil corporations to engage in unrestricted ventures that led to environmental degradation and human rights abuses (Amao, 2008, p. 82). Moreover, as oil corporations continue to destroy the physical environment and abuse human rights, NGOs and human rights groups continue to criticize them.

Amnesty International (AI) has pointed out that Chevron was involved in human rights abuses at its Escravos oil terminal in February 2005, when soldiers from the Joint Task Force began to shoot at protesters resulting in the death of one and numerous more who were wounded in the process (Amnesty International, 2005). The protests that took place were the result of the Global Memorandum of Understanding between Chevron and the Ugborodo community in which the community promised a “non disruptive operating environment” in return for jobs and development projects in their community, which community members say never materialized or have been only half-fulfilled (Amnesty International, 2005). Amnesty International further states that neither the corporation nor the security forces provided adequate medical care or assistance in transport to the hospital for the dozens injured at their facilities in the protest (Amnesty International, 2005). AI and other human rights groups have reported that to date, no thorough or independent assessment into the events of February 4, 2005 have been carried out by the corporation or the Nigerian government (Amnesty International, 2006).

Although the Escravos incident has been a very public display of the hostile situation between the Deltan communities and the corporation, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), a non-profit organization that deals with the protection of human rights within the United States as well as internationally, argues that Chevron has had a history of engaging in cover ups and human rights abuses at its facilities in Nigeria, with the 2005 incident being only one of many in the corporations activities (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2010). The CCR draws attention to the highly

publicized case of *Bowoto v. Chevron*, which stems from an incident in May 1998, where Chevron was accused of participating in and orchestrating the murder, shooting, and torture of Nigerian villagers who were protesting against the corporation for its environmental abuses in the region (Center for Constitutional Rights, 2010). Chevron's own claims of supporting human rights and security in the region have been left tainted by this trial according to several organizations, despite the fact that the corporation was found not liable for the events in a United States federal court by jury decision in 2008. It is worth pointing out that the on August 14, 2007, Federal Judge Susan Allston, the judge presiding in the case before the verdict was reached found that:

“It is apparent that Chevron Nigeria and Nigerian forces had a much closer relationship than the traditional relationship between private parties and law enforcement officials in this country. The Nigerian forces were on the Chevron Nigeria payroll and engaged in extensive security work for Chevron Nigeria. Chevron Nigeria did not simply dial 911.”
(Center for Constitutional Rights, 2010).

Chevron has also been attempting to ignore and cover up the effects of its operations in the Delta region, as noted by CorpWatch. CorpWatch is an organization that prides itself upon holding corporations accountable for their actions by publicly releasing documentation that showcases abuses committed by corporations in developing countries (CorpWatch, 2010). CorpWatch placed the Chevron corporation at the center of an oil spill in 2007 in the Niger Delta which left hundreds of villagers homeless and severely destroyed the land (CorpWatch, 2007).

Frynas (2005) states that oil corporations have come under intense pressure from NGOs and human rights groups to “do something” in regards to development, the environment, and human rights (p. 583). Frynas cites the case of 1995 Brent Spar and the crisis in Nigeria as reasons for Shell oil’s “conversion” to promoting “corporate responsibility”, and ethical operations in their daily operations (p. 583). External pressures have not been the only reasons for oil corporations to engage and promote socially responsible behaviour. Frynas puts forth that corporations obtain “competitive advantage” by participating in “corporate responsible ” behaviour and it also allows them to “manage external perceptions” (p. 583). Frynas notes that by oil corporations participating in “good” and “ethical” practices, they are rewarded by incentives and tax breaks from governments in exchange for “social giving” to the developing country in the forms of community development initiatives (p. 583). The community development initiatives have become used as a “competitive weapon” by the corporations and the initiatives undertaken by these corporations may have been geared towards the government’s liking and not necessarily for the benefit of the citizens that these initiatives have been “ostensibly” undertaken (p. 584).

Corporate responsibility engagement has been employed by oil corporations in order to control their image. Frynas (2005) argues that oil corporations have utilized corporate social initiatives for public relations purposes with no real consideration “of their success in fostering the long term development of a local community” and have also highly promoted development projects that did not in fact exist on the ground (p. 585). For Frynas, the critical reason why oil corporations have engaged in corporate

responsibility policies is because the government (or “quasi-government”, as Frynas calls it) has failed in its role to foster development (p. 596). Along with the state, oil corporations are being seen as “quasi-government”, thus rendering the corporations to implement corporate social initiatives on the basis of their new “status” as well as to improve their relations with Nigerian citizens (p. 596). However, as I will argue in this thesis corporate responsibility initiatives can be seen as neoliberal forms of governance. More specifically, I will explore how through their corporate responsibility initiatives three oil corporations in Nigeria – ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron - are involved in capacity- building efforts as a form of governing citizens.

V. CONSTRUCTION OF NEOLIBERAL CITIZENS

The three oil corporations have launched numerous projects in the Nigerian region that are specifically geared towards making the citizens responsible and self-sufficient for their own livelihoods while at the same time fostering development through these initiatives as part of the corporation’s claims of being “socially responsible”. I will argue below that these projects can be seen as a way ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron govern Nigerian citizens by transforming them into competitive and economic savvy individuals that are able to self-regulate themselves by becoming autonomous and capable of competing freely within the Nigerian market. As part of the processes of neoliberalism, privatization and de-regulation have become the norm in developing countries, where MNCs hold enormous power and influence pertaining to their activities and within the host governments. Within Nigeria, each oil corporation has yielded power and influence

over their affairs and has taken on many functions of the state by governing Nigerian citizens through their activities and involvement in initiatives pertaining to neoliberal processes.

ExxonMobil has focused on three specific areas pertaining to community building initiatives: workforce development, supplier development, and strategic community investments (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 4). Exxon has claimed that through these projects it employed and trained national citizens and has consequently boosted local production and services (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 4). ExxonMobil has also stated that it has formed business “partnerships” with the host governments as well as local, national, and international agencies and that all partners support projects and programs that ExxonMobil claims “drive economic development and improve the quality of life” for the people affected by ExxonMobil’s operations (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 4). Exxon states that a “mutually beneficial partnership with our host communities is important to our core business operations” (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 7). Some of the “partnerships” Exxon claims to have involved itself with in order to “improve the quality of life” of the people have been with the Episcopal Relief Development organization as well as Safe Blood for Africa (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 8).

Developing national content has further meant that Exxon will continue to create local jobs, educate and provide the training necessary to its employees, contractors, and suppliers, sharing the knowledge and skills in order to build local capacity, and will buy locally developed products and services, which, according to the corporation, will

contribute greatly to the Nigerian economy (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 4). Exxon asserts that they “contribute through employment and training of national citizens, building local capacity and utilizing local goods and services” as well as by being a “partner with our host governments and with local, national, and international organizations to support a wide range of programs and projects” (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 4).

From a governmentality perspective, we can see the initiatives put forward by ExxonMobil as a way of training local citizens to engage in the “entrepreneurial conduct of economically rational individuals” which, as Dean (1999) asserts, is a part of neoliberal governance (p. 156). In addition to this, Exxon’s initiatives can be termed to be “technologies of performance”, which have been used as “indirect” means for the regulation of citizens, transforming them into “calculating individuals” (p. 169). Exxon’s community-building initiatives have also been constructed into shaping the conduct of Nigerian citizens in order for the corporation to gain “optimization of performance”, which has become necessary under neoliberalism (p. 169).

In addition to these initiatives, Exxon has involved itself with micro-credit as a form of capacity-building within the Niger Delta (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 7). Exxon states that these projects are “aimed at promoting greater economic independence for the people in our communities” (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 7). The corporation also maintains that these projects include “capacity-building, training and micro-financing of small- and medium sized enterprises” which benefit the local population achieve greater economic independence (ExxonMobil, 2008, p. 7).

Micro-credit initiatives, according to Lazar (2004), have been used as a “development intervention” within the neoliberal philosophy pertaining to the “entrepreneurial” and “individual” citizen who is rendered responsible for their own entrepreneurial activities (p. 302). In addition to this, Lazar argues that micro-credit enterprises have become a form of disciplining and shaping individuals under which the “shaping” is now being done by private actors and NGOs instead of the state (p. 302). ExxonMobil being a private corporation has used micro-credit projects as a form of discipline towards the citizens in Nigeria, with the citizens being “shaped” into becoming responsible and economically rational. One way that the corporation has disciplined and “shaped” Nigerian citizens into becoming economically rational has been to provide funding for skills training and leadership programs for women in accordance with the corporation’s own ideals (ExxonMobil, 2008b, p. 36). Exxon’s asserts that: “preparing women to participate competitively in the economy allows companies, including ours, to have access to the best talent for employee recruitment and supply chain development, regardless of gender” (ExxonMobil, 2008b, p. 36). Exxon’s statement reinforces the notion that under neoliberalism, becoming economically rational and responsible is necessary in order to compete within society, with ExxonMobil taking the measures to implement these ideals.

Further to this, Rankin (2001) describes micro-credit initiatives under neoliberalism as a political strategy that “promotes a new understanding of the means and ends of economic governance” which lead to new forms of control (p. 22). ExxonMobil’s involvement with these micro-credit projects, alongside the corporation’s

affiliation with local organizations has produced a new form of economic governance over the citizens in Nigeria in which the citizens are being controlled by the new “market forces” of the micro-credit scheme as part of the new governmental and political rationality. The economic governance over citizens can be examined by analyzing Exxon’s statement pertaining to its projects. Exxon states that: “our country affiliates play an integral role in shaping our investments by ensuring that our projects align with national needs and governmental priorities” which from a critical governmentality approach indicate that the projects highlighted by Exxon represent a new political rationality and form of governance, one where the corporation has aligned itself with the market forces and not necessarily with the citizens of Nigeria.

For Fairclough (2003) neoliberal ideologies that focus on the enhancement of economic performance have become desirable (p. 58). The Shell oil corporation has undertaken initiatives that illustrate adherence with these neoliberal ideologies and discourses. Shell has used its affiliation with the Scholarship Scheme, and particularly, its involvement with the National Merit Award (NM) and the Areas of Operational Merit Award (AOM) as evidence that it has led to “capacity building” within the local Nigerian communities by extending an opportunity to local citizens to enhance their educational credentials and contribute to Nigerian society (Shell, 2007). The NM and the AOM initiatives are two separate scholarship schemes that are open to Nigerian undergraduate students residing within the areas of Shell’s operations, in which Shell selects “qualified” candidates to apply for these schemes on the basis of the student’s aptitude test results (Shell, 2007).

Shell has also made statements that its programs, The Youth Training & Enterprise Program (YTEP) as well as the Work Force Training (WFT) initiative have developed the skills of the Nigerian youth in areas pertaining to technological innovations, which has allowed them to gain “useful skills with which they can gainfully be self-employed” (Shell, 2010). Thus, the corporation has attempted to transform individuals into productive and self-regulated citizens.. As in the case of ExxonMobil, Shell has also undertaken micro-credit initiatives in the region as part of the corporation’s development initiative. Shell has boasted that it has been involved in the implementation of over 200 community-based enterprises, micro-credit and youth business development projects that the local communities have “benefited” from due to the loans received from partnerships between Shell and the local banks, the Nigerian government, NGOs, and other private actors (Shell, 2010b). One example of Shell’s involvement with community-based enterprises has been with its LiveWire program, which was launched in 2003 on the basis of marketing business start-up as a viable career option (Shell, 2010c). In addition to this, Shell states that its LiveWire program is also used to encourage youth development by facilitating “business choices, preparation of business plans and business start-ups by youths” as well as creating employment opportunities (Shell, 2010c). As well as LiveWire, Shell uses the Olomoro community micro-credit initiative as one of its examples of community empowerment, with the corporation claiming that this project led to “some 200 people” benefiting as well as demonstrating “accountability and community ownership of the micro credit scheme” (Shell, 2010b).

Shell's micro-credit initiatives have been indicative of what Lemke (2001) sees as the "re-coding of social mechanisms" pertaining to societal relations and the new forms of domination (p. 203). The micro-credit scheme and the newly formed partnerships between all the collective actors further exemplify being "instruments of neoliberal governance" wherein the citizens have become governed by not only Shell but by all the actors at the different social levels under the illusion of becoming self-sufficient and economically rational (Philips & Ilcan, 2004, p. 396).

Chevron has also introduced projects to increase the self-sufficiency of local citizens. The corporation has boasted of having funded the Biotechnology Center of the Federal University of Technology in Yola, which was created to further the study and development of food production and reduction of various diseases. The corporation claims that this Centre would benefit the Nigerian people, by stating that investing in technological advances is "a tool for progress" for the communities (Chevron, 2009). In addition to this, the corporation has actively advocated Global Memorandums of Understanding in the Nigerian communities to allow local citizens, ostensibly to become independent and manage their own affairs. The Global Memorandums of Understanding within the local communities, according to Chevron are intended to "empower communities by promoting responsible, participatory development; improve relationships between CNL and community stakeholders; and foster collaboration in the Niger Delta region" (Chevron, 2008, p. 33). A further goal of the Global Memorandums of Understanding has been to "bring peace and stability" as well as reduce conflict in areas where Chevron operates (Chevron, 2009).

In addition, Chevron proclaims that the implementation of the Global Memorandums of Understanding have “increased dialogue” and “improved issues” between the corporation and the communities (Chevron, 2008, p. 33). The focus on the Global Memorandums of Understanding is directly applicable to the re-structuring of relations at the local and global levels. The relationships between the Nigerian communities and the corporations has become more visible due to the re-structuring, which has focused on the shift in social and political relations.

From a governmentality perspective, we can argue that the basis for Chevron’s initiatives has been contaminated by what Dean (1999) terms to be the manipulation of the environment where interests come into play and where certain behaviors “flourish” as a result of the manipulation (p. 158). Under the guise of operating “ethically” and “responsibly” by permitting the citizens of the Delta to become developed, Chevron has manipulated the environment to suit its own interests by shifting the responsibility onto the citizens to manage their own “problems”. Chevron has further used its involvement with the Global Memorandums of Understanding as a public relations tool in order to yield power and control while appearing to be “responsible” and “ethical”.

The “responsibilization” of individuals to become economically savvy has become part of the “contemporary formula of rule” which Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Shell have used under the guise of being “socially responsible” (Dean, 1999, p. 166). The “responsibilization” of individuals in line with neoliberal rationalities of governance has resulted in the governance of Nigerian citizens.

With the focus on the “responsibilization” and self-regulation of citizens by the three private oil corporations in Nigeria, the processes which have produced these neoliberal rationalities of governance have become utilized as a form of economic and political control. It has become abundantly clear that each corporation has found it economically and politically viable to promote its capacity-building projects as a form of corporate responsibility. The evidence that I have presented has provided insight into the various ways that ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Shell govern the citizens of Nigeria through the guise of being “socially responsible” all in accordance with their neoliberal ideals.

VI. CONCLUSION

My thesis has focused on the shift towards neoliberal forms of governance and how this shift has affected the relations between governments, private actors, and citizens. I have looked at how within neoliberal governmentality, corporations have taken on many functions held previously by the state and have utilized these functions to govern individuals through various means. I have explored how ExxonMobil, Shell, and Chevron have and continue to maintain an image of being “ethical” and “socially responsible” by engaging in certain projects. I have demonstrated how each corporation has engaged in community building projects as a form of governance technique to discipline Nigerian citizens and make them productive and self-reliant. The governance of individuals by these corporations has allowed me to explore a territory that has been largely absent in the corporate responsibility literature. In this thesis, I highlighted the mechanisms the three oil corporations have used to govern the citizens of Nigeria through their “socially

responsible” initiatives. Under the current neoliberal form of governance, many of the processes that have resulted from the shift towards this mode of government have contributed to the current corporate responsibility “crisis” in Nigeria. These changes have prompted me to examine how private actors in Nigeria have maintained control over their subjects while at the same time still publicly asserting that their corporate activities in Nigeria have contributed to development and self-reliance for Nigeria’s citizens. The current situation reflects the neoliberal ideology where corporate interests take precedence over the needs of the people, with Nigeria being no exception. By presenting the case of oil corporations in Nigeria and the way they govern local citizens, my intention was to put forth just one piece of the puzzle to document the shifting power relations within the modern era of governance.

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