

Lifescapes of a Pipedream

A Decolonial Mixtape

of

Structural Violence and Resistance

in Two Towns Along the
Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline

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15 April 2015

DPhil Thesis

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Abstract

People's narratives, interpretations and understanding of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline and pipeline actors emphasise the uneven exercise of power through which structural violence is effected and experienced. The complexity of the processes of structural violence along with local socio-political context and peoples' dynamic understandings thereof play major roles in shaping resistance practices, in complex ways in Kribi and Nanga-Eboko. Working from these narratives, I offer a theoretical re-articulation of structural violence as (i) tangible through the body, (ii) historically compounded, (iii) spatially compressed and (iv) enacted in a globalised geopolitical nexus by actors who are spatially nested within a racialised and gendered hierarchy of scale. Drawing from critical interdisciplinary work on violence, my theory of a triad of divergent, often interrelated and co-existing, distinguishable indexes of structural violence includes: infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence and institutionalized structural violence. The particular processes and mechanisms of uneven power within structural violence, local socio-political contexts and the epistemologies through which power is conceived (in this case I consider epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*, or witchcraft) inform resistance practices; I illuminate key operations (within geographies characterised by high levels of infra/structural violence) within the spatial practices of power that influence the tendency for resistance struggles to be quiet, spontaneous and/or labour-based. I conclude with a discussion of the political and intellectual value of academic work on life and being amid structural violence, emphasising the need to move beyond the invisible/visible dichotomy that has often informed intellectual work on structural violence.



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Introduction
A Decolonial Mixed-Tape of Structural Violence and Resistance
Along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline

The pain, anger and struggles bound up within experiences of land dispossession and loss along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline were palpable during conversations with people in Nanga-Eboko (or Nanga, as it is called by the people who live here) and Kribi, Cameroon. In this early thirties, Sewa¹, whose mother is the chief of Mpango (a village outside of Kribi, on Cameroon's southern Atlantic coast), went to university in Douala and now works as a middleman in the processing of small-scale real estate transactions in the greater Kribi area. As a *proche*² or advisor to the chief, he introduced me to people in the greater Kribi area who were willing to or interested in talking about the pipeline. During a powerful moment in one of our discussions he told me,

There was never any consulting with the villagers [concerning the location of the pump reducing station in Mpango], despite the fact that we had already

¹ Some names have remained unchanged while others have been altered to preserve anonymity (each reflects the personal preference of the person). In a project concerned with recovering, uncovering, and creating space for people's voices, lives, ontologies and epistemologies, I felt that a discursive violence would be effected by effacing the names of those who specifically requested that I not do so. Many of the people whom I spoke with were adamant that their stories be heard, powerfully asserting *their right to be known*—not as a number, a euphemism or a pseudonym, but as themselves. The literature on power and politics in ethnographic research almost uniformly espouses the need for anonymity, emphasizing the researcher's position of power and privileging the researcher's ability to consider the dangers of revealing people's identities. In this case, dismissing people's demands to have their names recorded would be a discursive injustice. There is no indication of which names have been changed for anonymity and which have not.

² Following decolonial critiques of linguistic Anglo-centrism, non-English words are not italicized, not placed in quotations and not visually set apart from English here. The visual practices of italicizing or isolating non-English words contribute (even inadvertently) to colonizing projects, labelling non-English languages as aberrant, exotic, or Other.

opened a file about the ownership of that land. They never asked us anything and they never reimbursed us anything for the loss. They just closed the file that we had opened about village ownership. Even today, they continue to make extensions and they never tell us anything about it. I know that even if we had legal papers they could have cancelled them. Even though the land is the government's [by law], there is a psychological shame that should be reimbursed.

Sitting with him in his mother's living room, I asked no more questions, considering his proposal to take into account the psychological shame experienced through processes of loss, displacement and disempowerment. He looked pointedly at me for several minutes as the silence settled between us. I reflected on his insightful commentary on the emotionality of the destruction and transformation of place along the pipeline; Sewa's words reflect some of the dissonance between capitalist modernisation projects (embedded, as they often are, within a drive for unceasing profit) and people's complex and emotive psychological attachments to place. He spoke uninterrupted for several minutes as I listened, nodding and murmuring 'mmm' from time to time.

Here, we have no health centre, we have no [functioning] water wells... Even the school, it was us, the villagers who started the process to build the school and it was COTCO [the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company, in charge of oversight and management of the pipeline in Cameroon] who came in and completed the funds. It is lamentable... It hurts so much.

He stops briefly. I nod and he continues,

We don't like to even speak of it. As long as the [pressure reducing] station is there, I tell you that it is political. You know, they employ other black people there [at the station]—other Cameroonians, but [they are] Anglophones [in a predominantly francophone region]—to guard and protect it, to keep us out... but one day we will wake up/get up [se lever]. People have to become conscious [prendre conscience].

Sewa's emphasis on the 'psychological shame' (*une honte psychologique*) indicates the depth of loss felt as a result of the appropriation of land near Mpango for the pipeline project, despite claims to the land having already been filed on behalf of the

village. The loss of land is coupled with his feelings of anger at the seemingly categorical dismissal of people, who, as he reiterates, have no health clinic and no employment prospects, whose water sources were contaminated during the pipeline construction and whose schoolroom is credited by COTCO, even though it was the villagers who pooled money to begin its construction. His narrative denotes a magnitude of loss not easily calculable. During another discussion, this time with a group of people who had been negatively impacted by the pipeline in Nginda, outside of Nanga, one man told me, ‘You know, my daughter, the land there—it is the belly’, as he spoke he pointed to the dense forest behind us and then emphatically palmed his stomach. His friends and neighbours nodded and murmured in agreement. ‘If you take it away—you *feel* it, you cannot forget it. [For] all the days of our lives... we will always think of the pipe[line]’.

The official narratives that enable processes of dispossession—which assert the value, cost and monetary reimbursement as well as the primacy of the state in determining all three—reify an earlier colonial dichotomy between ‘utile’ and ‘inutile’ (useful and useless) land.³ The narratives of people—which centre on loss, community, psychological attachment, the belly, the body and nourishment—are at

³ Cameroon’s land tenure laws are based on inherited colonial laws, which remained unchanged in the post-colonial period. During colonialism, colonial administrators imposed a system of eminent domain, which facilitated the large-scale appropriation of native lands under the guise of public interest. French colonial administrators made distinctions between l’Afrique utile (useful Africa) and l’Afrique inutile (useless Africa), delineating the profitability of resource rich areas (useful in generating colonial profit), from ‘useless’ regions, which were abandoned by the colonial state for being unproductive. Cameroon’s post-colonial policies mirror these earlier divisions, reproducing a colonial resource enclave mentality. There are four types of property in Cameroon: national land, private national land (land that the government has taken aside and declared for its use, this is often land which is rented out to international organisations and enterprises), private land (owned with a title by an individual) and customary (inherited to villages or to families without a formal title).

odds. As Sewa and I spoke, he illuminated his cell phone to check the time. He had his cousin's deuil, or bereavement ceremony, to attend. He ended our conversation, 'I have a deuil to go to; otherwise, I would have shown you the obstacles that they have placed along the pipeline to make sure we cannot even go onto our land anymore'.



Figure 2. Community of Nanga-Eboko, the passage of the pipeline is just visible to the south (indicated by placement of blue arrows). *Source:* Google Earth.

Andile Mngxitama (2013: 10) describes the loss of land in Africa as 'a void and a great menacing silence'. Land loss entails a psychological and physical displacement from past, present and future, one that people encounter and reencounter everyday as they pass by places that have been appropriated, transformed or destroyed for extractive and infra/structurally violent projects. Mngxitama (2013: 10) challenges the rhetoric that 'positions land theft in the realm of material dispossession'; instead arguing that land theft is a central part of the black experience of modernity. In his article, *Not Only our Land but Also Our Souls*, he writes

land [is] the source of life and death; it [is]... like a mother who gives her children sustenance without which they would perish... it gives us life and when we die it takes us back... can this other loss be named, and the conditions of redress concretised in a set of demands that can speak the language of rights and fit into the established lexicon of the losses that can be repaired?' (Mngxitama 2013: 10).

Mngxitama powerfully interrogates the framings of conversations and debates on land

Figure 3. Kilometre Point Zero of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. Komé, Chad.

Source: Esso Chad, file photo.



expropriations in Africa, what he unequivocally terms ‘land theft’. This consequence of the practices of structural violence, particularly infra/structural structural violence, as I argue herein—land dispossession—is deeply embedded within the rhetoric of coloniality, including the principles of imminent domain, corporate effectiveness and the maximisation of profit; so much so that even conceiving the emotional and psychological magnitude of loss is unmanageable within liberal frameworks of individual rights or human rights standards—both of which have historically excluded entire communities from the domain of ‘human’ and are based on the principality of the individual, despite inherent contradictions within this conception, for example, how the rights of one community might be expressed through the dispossessions of another (Moyn 2010).

In a regime of positivist scientism that establishes knowledge and fact on

measurable, observable (visible) analysis, the official verdicts posited by institutionalized knowledge hegemons, such as the World Bank, continue to establish ‘value’ and ‘reality’, while deviations from official versions—such as emotive attachment to land, unobservable social phenomena or shifts in agricultural patterns in areas where no baseline data has been established, for example—remain in ‘the domain of the unthinkable’ (Trouillot 1995:93) and, as such, are devalued and discounted as invalid or unsubstantiated. These arguments are reflected in the writings of a former spokesperson of the World Bank, Robert Calderisi (2006), in his book, *The Trouble with Africa*. Calderisi brushes aside concerns for the livelihoods of Cameroonians and Chadians as insignificant and minor in the engineering of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. He writes,

critics blew minor issues out of proportion. A typical concern was how much farmers should be paid for fruit trees cut down along the pipeline route. The idea of compensating them at all was rather original, as most of them were subsistence farmers and consumed the fruit themselves (Calderisi 2006:184).

Calderisi’s reflections expose a lack of concern with destruction along the pipeline when the objects destroyed fall outside of market valuation: food for familial consumption is valueless in a reductive market-centric approach. Cameroon’s land tenure policy inherited from a colonial system that prioritised accumulation by and for the state,⁴ but the reimbursement and compensation strategies of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project were implemented through World Bank and corporate-imposed land tenure categories that reified colonial concepts of bush, field and fallow (Cotula et al. 2007; Grovogui and Leonard 2007; Obioha 2008). ‘Bush’ was defined by the consortium as areas of land that remained uncultivated for more than one growing season (Volume 3 of the EMP). This particular construction of ‘bush’, Siba Grovogui and Lori Leonard (2007: 49) explain, ‘discounts the extent of villagers’ interactions

⁴ See footnote 3.

with or activities in nature: hunting, gathering, fishing, and the like'. People's attachments to land were temporally quantified as well, with the oil consortium concluding that leaving a field to fallow for one growing season breaks people's claims to land. In practice, land is left to fallow to prevent nutrient depletion and erosion, this is a temporary process, after a period, anywhere from 2-10 growing seasons, farming resumes. Deeming fallow land 'uncultivated' has serious consequences for local agricultural practices; problematically, these categorisations of land are based on Western notions of public and private, enabling the consortium to confiscate areas that they deemed as 'uncultivated' and therefore 'un-owned' (Grovgui and Leonard 2007). Casting land as unused paved the way for the appropriation of land for the purposes of capital accumulation without compensation, a strategy imposed during the colonial period which continues today.

Due to the inherited colonial practice of deeming all untitled land state land, most people were not reimbursed for loss of land during the implementation of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline; they were reimbursed the determined market value (based on estimates from social scientists solicited by the World Bank) for the material found on that land (be it a home, a field or an identified grazing area). If nothing of market value was found on the land, it was simply absorbed into the project with no reimbursement. A person's 'eligibility factor' for compensation is calculated as corde per dependent (EssoChad, SSP Ngalaba 2009: 5). Land value was defined by the EMP in terms of viable 'sacks of sorghum'; this is to say, land was deemed valuable in terms of its calculated agricultural productivity, according to standards established by the oil consortium (EssoChad, SSP Ngalaba 2009: 5). Compensation was paid according to the determined market prices of the commodities or potential commodities destroyed. This is why, Joyce Endeley (2010)

explains, women were more likely to be compensated less than men: men are more likely to be involved in farming cash crops while women tend to farm for food crops intended for consumption by the family. The long-term loss, for both men and women farmers, was ignored by the consortium's compensation policies (Endeley 2010).



Figure 4. Pipeline Pump Reduction Station figures largely in the center of this image (note the two barren plots of earth). The village Mpango is to the southwest of the station. The southern edge of the community of Kribi is visible in the northwestern corner. *Source:* Google Earth.

A former COTCO community liaison officer similarly rejected the notion—popular in the village of Nanga where he lives—that people along the pipeline were inadequately reimbursed for the loss of land and crops. He referenced overlapping projects of land appropriation in Nanga as a means of justifying and even promoting the pipeline's reimbursement and compensation methods, in comparison: 'When the pipeline project passed, people were reimbursed *at least* [for the loss of crops with deemed market value]'. On the other hand, he explained, an on-going construction project in Nanga to extend CAMTEL's (Cameroon's national telecommunications and Internet service provider) network via an underground fibre optic cable included

no reimbursements.⁵ ‘[For the CAMTEL project,] they won’t be reimbursed for the loss of anything’, the former COTCO representative told me, adding that, ‘it is for the development of the country’. He speculated that people in Nanga continue to cultivate on land that the government asserts legal ownership of, in anticipation of reimbursement or compensation. This perspective implies that people’s attachments to land are fabricated, exaggerated or insignificant.

These interpretations of the pipeline—bound up, as they are, in particular interpretations and classifications of power, place and value, are saturated with a refusal to recognise the humanity of people along the pipeline, whose claims to land and place (and ultimately, the right to life, as Mngxitama, indicates) are irrelevant in the hegemonic discourse of order, public good and development. This refusal to recognise humanity—called ‘othering’ or ‘thingification’ (Memmi 1965; Said 1978; Amzaldúa 1987)—is an essential element of colonial ontologies and combatting the ‘thingification’ within colonial ontologies is a central concern of decolonial projects (Mignolo 2000, 2009, 2011; Escobar 2004, 2008; de Sousa Santos 2007; Grosfoguel 2008; Gordon 2011).

Pierre, a farmer who lives in a village outside of Kribi, explained, ‘Since the pipeline has been installed, nothing grows well. *We have no proof, but we know that is how it is.* It hurts inside. It honestly, seriously hurts. But who will listen to me?’ His words reflect an awareness of hegemony on official knowledge, which establishes the boundaries of viable ‘proof’—boundaries that exclude his lived experiences. As we spoke, we stood atop his former palm plantation, destroyed nearly a decade earlier during the construction of the pipeline. The passage had been re-cleared a few weeks earlier and there were burned spots here and there on the ground, dotting the land with

⁵ Work for the CAMTEL construction project is contracted to the Chinese company, Huawei Technologies.

the gold of rotting leaves and the black of burnt soot, extending as far as we could see in both directions.



Figure 5. Recently cleared pipeline right-of-way, near Kribi, Cameroon.

Background

With the construction of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline between 2000 and 2003, rainforests, farmlands, ancestral lands and homes were destroyed along a 30- to 50-meter wide and 1,070-kilometre long corridor in Chad and Cameroon. A material land space the size of the Benelux⁶ was appropriated for the project's 30-year lifespan; the pipeline passes beneath 238 villages and is within two kilometres of 794 additional villages (Lo 2010: 155). Internationally, the pipeline was one of the most critiqued and scrutinized oil projects in recent history, emerging as it did during a moment of growing disillusionment with top-down models of modernisation (Escobar 1995),

⁶ The Benelux includes Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

increasing international awareness and disapproval of the so-called ‘resource curse’⁷ and a growing awareness in civil society of oil-related ecological destruction, including the Idjerhe pipeline explosion on 17 October 1998 in the Niger Delta (Watts 1997). These criticisms were not unknown to the Bank, which came under a wave of international protests in the early 1990s under the slogan ‘Fifty Years is Enough’. In response to criticism from international agencies and non-governmental organisations, the consortium, led by the World Bank, crafted the pipeline to be *the* project that would end the resource curse through the implementation of mechanisms for poverty reduction (Pegg 2006).

Despite contentions that poverty alleviation and development ventures could be coupled with commercial and capitalist interests in a manner beneficial for all parties involved, the pipeline augmented structural violence and expanded militarism in the region. The negative effects brought on by oil extraction were magnified within a context of pre-existing post-colonial structural violence.⁸ Johan Galtung (1969) conceives of structural violence as working in tandem with direct violence, often establishing the framework through which direct violence occurs. Rob Nixon (2011) emphasizes the slowness and gradual nature through which structural violence unfolds; Paul Farmer (2004) looks at configurations of political and economic structures in the past and their ability to pave the way for present and future violence.

⁷ The ‘resource curse’ is a term used to describe the over-dependence on revenues from oil, lack of economic investment in other sectors, and increases in poverty, violence and conflict that are, paradoxically, associated with oil extraction (Auty 1993).

⁸ As I illustrate in my historical framework of the pipeline project, particularly in *Articles II, III and IV* herein, the pipeline was negotiated and engineered during a time in which Cameroonians were dis-inspired by local and national politics. Twenty years of austerity policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank through a number of Structural Adjustment Programmes had resulted in re-entrenchments of poverty, joblessness and corruption (Fombad and Fonyam 2004; Mbuagbo and Mbe Akoko 2004).

In contrast to scholars who interpret structural violence through analysis of its mechanisms and processes (Gupta 2012), outcomes (Galtung 1969) and representations (Nixon 2011), my focus on local interpretations and experiences of structural violence provides insight into the material production and contestation of structural violence in two towns along the oil pipeline, Kribi and Nanga. Oil extraction and transport in the region is situated within a larger context of structural violence in Cameroon, where the compounded effects of structural violence are evidenced in the *longue durée* of poverty, land dispossession, economic abandonment, social disruption and ecological damage.

Experiences, interpretations and epistemologies of power and violence inform resistance practices in rural and semi-urban areas along the pipeline. This was the case in the villages around Kribi and Nanga, where I lived for seven and a half months to work on this project. The pipeline, whose engineers actively sought to avoid densely populated urban spaces so as to reduce the number of people and communities affected, particularly impacted rural people. Doing so, however, meant that vulnerable semi-rural populations, who have little legal and political recourse for land dispossessions of the scale brought about by the pipeline, were disproportionately impacted.

I trace some of the shifts, continuities and ambiguities of epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* (loosely, ‘witchcraft’), illustrating that they are powerful indicators of how people understand the structural violence, economic inequalities, and power disparities bound up within the pipeline project. Cameroonian epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* are entangled within and have been transformed by colonial violence, the transatlantic slave trade, and post-colonial dispossessions in Cameroon and act as a cultural language for understanding multiple forms of violence throughout history.

Paradoxically, however, while they provide a language of cultural resistance that conceptualizes and critiques large-scale dispossessions such as the pipeline, they simultaneously relegate action to the scale of the family, in some cases accelerating the rupturing of the community begun by the pipeline project.

Animated by recent debates in development and radical geographies (particularly work on geographies of violence and geographies of resistance), transdisciplinary decolonial scholarship and interdisciplinary work on structural violence, I foreground resistance practices to ask: what do people's interpretations, stories and experiences of structural violence tell us about the features of living amidst structural violence? First, I note the lack of an agreed upon and identifiable agent against which to resist, due to the fracturing of a multitude of actors within networks of structural violence. Second, there is a sense of the uncertainty as to a process through which to take organised or even individual action safely, when people expressed an interest in doing so. A third factor that precludes organised resistance is the tendency for community members and communities to be unevenly incorporated within structures of violence, be this a reflection of location along the pipeline, proximity to the pipeline within the village, gender, age, political connections or ethnic heritage. Each of these processes, mechanisms and characteristics, I argue, is crucial to an understanding of moments, sentiments and contextual practices of resistance, many of which are not successful in an established sense but which elucidate some of the complexities of life and struggle amid structural violence. Resistance practices, in this context, unfold in the realm of quiet resistance and labour organising, often spontaneously.

The project is framed as a 'decolonial mixed-tape' as a means to bring attention to creative practice as a form of politics. Musical mixed-tapes engage with human

experience through experimentations with form, politics, aesthetics and presence. This project is grounded by a decolonial concern with the tensions and institutional frameworks that define and create boundaries within academic knowledge, particularly how these boundaries exclude or disapprove of non-hegemonic narratives. Drawing inspiration from a mixed-tape imaginary, I mix and cut aesthetic forms (film, photography, poetry, narrative, theory) in an effort to introduce different, and even divergent, possibilities of understanding the non-coherent landscapes and lifescapes of Kribi and Nanga.

Central objectives

I use a decolonial lens to disengage from dominant liberal readings of the pipeline, which have been underpinned by Eurocentric notions of the primacy of market mechanisms, individualism, and quantified human rights, and which (i) struggle to engage in any meaningful way with local people's ontologies, epistemologies, and narratives of structural violence and, therefore, (ii) dismiss people's concerns and accounts of structural violence as incoherent, unsubstantiated or lacking proof (this is particularly important as no baseline studies were conducted prior to the pipeline's construction).

In so doing, I work towards a holistic understanding of people's (complex, multiple, and multidimensional) experiences living in (and sometimes resisting against) a context of intersecting forms of structural violence and oppression, in which the pipeline is both situated within and contributing to a nexus of structural violence. Performing more than a critique of dominant discourses, I work to extend and deepen the narrative of the pipeline to include the ontologies, perspectives and stories of the people who live alongside it in the villages outside of Nanga and Kribi.

My analysis shows that people's varying ontological perspectives (always plural), such as *la sorcellerie*, are powerful frameworks through which people confront, assess and/or resist structural violence along the pipeline.

I offer an articulation of structural violence that is centred upon people's experiences and perspectives. This theory of structural violence emphasizes (i) the continuity of the experiences of structural violence across time and space, (ii) the material and everyday consequences of structural violence, and (iii) the visible and seen within structural forms of violence. That is to say, unlike foundational arguments in the literature on structural violence that this violence is invisible and unseen (Farmer 2000, 2004; Žižek 2008; Nixon 2011), structural violence is acutely visible to the people who live within its confines along the pipeline right-of-way. In thinking through and confronting critiques of structural violence, in my final article herein, I propose a triad of differing manifestations of structural violence, composed of: infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence and institutionalized structural violence.

I couple an examination of structural forms of violence with a nuanced analysis of how people resist, acquiesce, and live in spaces of hardship. This is an important contribution to the literature on structural violence, where the trend has been to focus on the mechanisms and processes of social structures and work has mostly avoided considerations of the active participation and agency of people within spaces characterized by pervasive forms of structural violence and oppression.

A decolonial approach to the research

While living in Nanga and Kribi, I spoke with community leaders, pipeline employees and community members. I interacted with people during non-official gatherings,

while accompanying people to agricultural fields and other places of work, as we ate, cooked or walked together.⁹ I focused on building relationships with people in the community; by this I mean, visiting with people about more than the pipeline, responding to their questions and curiosities about my personal history and honouring their knowledge and life experiences. This approach, as I illustrate in my first article, is particularly important in communities that have been aggressively studied.¹⁰

Conversations, in this way, were approached with a decolonial ethic, guided by a grounded ethical and political orientation that is attentive foremost to the voices and experiences of the people in the places where I worked and an emphasis on building relationships through respectful conversations that seek to honour their testimonies. This approach is aligned with a decolonial ethos and critical geographical work on narrative as a mode of knowing, a means through which people make sense of ‘reality’ and as a mode of communication within social science research (Bruner 1986, 1990; Polkinghorne 1988; Czarniawska 2004; Raghuram and Madge 2006; Prokkola 2014). Research received guidance from the concerns and experiences of the people involved in the research and used film and the subsequent screening of film as a means of extending the meaning- and memory-making of the project.

In addition to speaking with people, I conducted an extensive review of (i) newspapers and periodicals (including oil-funded marketing prior to the pipeline’s construction and local commentary on potential outcomes of the project), (ii) ExxonMobil and the World Bank project documents, and (iii) audio-visual materials

⁹ For in-depth commentary on conducting research in landscapes characterised by high levels of structural violence, see the subsection ‘The dilemmas of spectator empathy’ within, *Conclusion: On Seeing, Knowing, Sensing and Narrating Violence*.

¹⁰ My decolonial approach is outlined much more thoroughly in the *Survey of Literatures*, under the subsections, ‘Why a decolonial approach?’ and ‘A genealogy of decolonial thought’; as well as in *Article I, Searching for a Decolonising Ethos Beyond the ‘Language of the Mouth’*.

(including video testimonies from the nongovernmental organization, *Le Centre Pour l'Environnement et le Développement* in Yaoundé).

Outline of chapters¹¹

The *Survey of Literatures* in this doctoral thesis considers the literatures on decolonial thinking and praxis; the literatures from Peace Studies scholars, human geographers and scholar-activists on structural violence; and the literatures on geographies and practices of resistance. *Article I* outlines an ethos for decolonising knowledge creation against *la langue de la bouche* (the language of the mouth): this ethos requires an attentive contextualisation to the *longue durée* of the geopolitics of knowledge where we are on the ground. Drawing from socio-political narratives of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, I explore some of the potentials for a critical knowledge making that endeavours to be relational, co-creational and grounded against the language of the mouth. *Article II* (forthcoming in *Human Geography – A New Radical Journal*) argues that for people who live within spaces (re)produced through structurally violent processes, projects and extractions, structural violence is felt as (i) *tangible through the body* (i.e., described through senses of loss, the belly, the body and nourishment), (ii) *historically compounded* (i.e., characterized by a rootedness in the colonial and racist structures of the past alongside expectations that

¹¹ This thesis is structured to meet the DPhil requirements of a ‘Published Paper’ monograph in the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. According to the guidelines, the journal articles must both ‘stand alone’ and be ‘sufficiently coherent and comprehensive to pass the doctoral examination’ as a cohesive project. The structure for the ‘Published Paper Route’ is: Introduction, Literature Review (less comprehensive than a typical DPhil thesis because each article has an internal literature review) and conclusion, in addition to the articles. The articles must be submitted to (but not necessarily already published in) academic journals at the time of submission. Please note that because articles have been written for journal publication, the citation and English language styles vary across the articles (as per the requirements of each academic journal).

present-day structural violence threatens future generations) and (iii) *spatially compounded* (i.e., experienced through a concurrent spatial overlapping (or compounding) as multiple forms of structural violence converge within the same landscapes and lifescapes). *Article III* (forthcoming at *Political Geography*) draws from epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* (witchcraft) in Nanga and Kribi to illustrate the importance of analysing unseen networks of power in political geography. While epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* provide frameworks for critiquing unseen actors and processes that bring about uneven distributions of wealth and risk along the oil pipeline, in practice, *la sorcellerie* relegates resistance-action to the level of the family, in some cases accelerating the rupturing of the community begun by the pipeline's violence.

Article IV looks at the divergent practices of resistance that emerge along the pipeline in Kribi and Nanga, while interrogating the usefulness of an urban/rural dichotomy in resistance studies within human geography. Illuminating key operations and actors of the oil pipeline, resistance struggles emerge within such spaces as quiet, spontaneous and/or labour-based. Anger, grief, regret and shame express some of the myriad of ways that people narrate a decade of experiences along the oil pipeline. Working from the cumulative understanding of lived experiences of structural violence presented throughout the articles, in *Article V*, I articulate a triad of distinguishable indexes of structural violence: infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence, and institutionalized structural violence and lay out a geographical understanding of this violence as (i) spatially compounded and (ii) produced in a globalised geopolitical nexus by actors who are spatially nested within a racialised and gendered hierarchy of scale.

The chain of arguments presented throughout the articles identifies

geographically attuned understandings of structural violence grounded foremost within people's narratives and experiences along the pipeline. The *Conclusion*, working from radical geographical and decolonial angles to approach scholarship on structural violence (presented forcefully in *Articles II* and *III*, in particular), dismisses the notion that structural violence is mostly invisible and argues for a re-evaluation of the position that the task of the scholar-activist is to 'render visible' forms of structural violence.

Narratives of structural violence & resistance along the pipeline

Critical scholarship has revealed the violence of large-scale modernization projects that fail to consider local ontologies and cultural sensitivities (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994, 2005; Scott 1998). My project responds to this need for an understanding of local ontologies by comprehensively integrating, through a decolonial approach, people's narratives of violence and resistance. The project endeavours to move beyond the naming of discursive erasing(s) to give weight to the voices that have not been attended to within the international discourse on the pipeline. In order to do this, I adopt a decolonial ethos within a multidisciplinary framework, supplementing the literature on the geographies of violence, where the focus has been on state violence, warfare and militarism (Le Billion 2004; Benedikt et al. 2010; Springer 2011). At the same time, there is a trend towards engaging 'the everyday' as a site of analysis within geographies of violence, for example in James Tyner and Sam Henkin's (2014) analysis of 'everyday death' and Michael McIntyre and Heidi Nast's (2011) bio(necro)polis. This development towards a focus on the production of premature death (Wilson 2007) and economic abandonment in the field of geography draws from the literatures on bare life (Agamben 1998), precarious life

(Butler 2004), wasted life (Bauman 2013), necropolitics (Mbembe 2003), disposability (Giroux 2006), surplus populations (Murray Li 2009), and expulsions (Sassen 2014). This expansive and interdisciplinary body of literature illustrates the varied and complex socio-economic and political patterns and structures that (re)produce debilitating life conditions for the people who are rendered materially ‘unnecessary’ by/in global capitalist processes. In this thesis, I consider how violent processes of dispossession, marginalization and exclusion are understood, narrated and experienced by people.

Starting with an attendance to the concomitant fracturing and reorganization of both biophysical territory and cultural landscape, I juxtapose the geography of resistance and interdisciplinary scholarship on structural violence, focusing on their common desires to elucidate uneven geographies of power and the socio-spatial conversions of neoliberal capitalism. As I illustrate in *Article II: Narratives of Life and Violence Along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline*, the structural violence of this pipeline was evidenced in the experiences of land dispossession and displacement in-place. Displacement in-place is the phenomenon of economic abandonment through the destruction of local livelihoods and large-scale ecological damage that destroy people’s home landscapes without physically displacing them from it.¹²

The first task of my research is to establish that the pipeline project is a violent project and that this violence unfolds through a complex nexus of structural processes and interrelations. In *Narratives of Life and Violence*, I argue that the structural violence of the pipeline is palpable through: (i) large scale land dispossession during which villagers report feeling betrayed, lied to and cheated; (ii) economic

¹² Physically displacement did occur in some cases along the pipeline in Cameroon, although usually not at great distances; people were most commonly dispossessed of agricultural and grazing lands.

abandonment and the destruction of livelihoods, particularly for farmers and fishers, leading to rising food insecurity and economic uncertainty, particularly among women, children and the elderly; (iii) family and social disruption, particularly during the construction period which includes reports of increased numbers of divorce and separation, sex work (and increasing HIV/AIDS rates) and conflict over the allocation and use of reimbursement funds; and iv) ecological damage. The latter includes two oil spills off the coast of Kribi, the destruction of coral reef vital to local fish stocks during the construction of the off shore storage facility, the production of an approximately 6 meter wide, 1,077 metre long wind-tunnel, the facilitation of illegal logging and poaching of endangered animals with road construction, the spread of moutmout (a fly whose bite causes river blindness) and water contamination. In *Article II, Narratives of Life and Violence and Engaging Invisible Power and Visible Dispossession Through Epistemologies of La Sorcellerie*, I trace the power nexus that creates the groundwork for structural violence. As such, the project offers an engagement with the ways in which the political geographies of resistance in Cameroon are shaped by the intersections between powerful global geopolitical forces and local politics. Structural violence is legitimised in this case through the discourse of development offered up by one of the project's key players, the World Bank. Once we understand the oil extraction and transportation project in a context of slowly evolving and spatially compounded violent processes, we can better understand how resistances play out amidst it.

The second task of my research is to elucidate the relationship between resistances, struggles and 'getting by' within spaces characterised by high levels of structural violence. To do so, I offer a theoretical re-articulation of structural violence, one in which its temporal, spatial and discursive operations are brought to

the fore. I explore the implications of using a theoretical framework of resistance, working from recent academic debates on the subject and exploring my very employment of the term itself: does ‘resistance(s)’ properly encapsulate the pluriform livelihood struggles and socio-cultural and political practices that emerge in the shadows of structural violence? Situating my analysis in the field of human geography in *Article IV, The Right to the Rural?*, I trouble the discrete separations between rural and urban forms of resistance, positing that a regional analysis of resistance might be better suited for an understanding of resistance in Cameroon.

While the exercise of power along the pipeline is palpable in the armed guards stationed before the pipeline’s fenced van stations and community narratives—such as people’s experiences with routine helicopter patrols or the knowledge of being incorporated within the permanent satellite surveillance along the pipeline route—the complexities of the processes of structural violence significantly prohibit organised resistance in several ways. These include: the lack of an agreed upon and identifiable culprit or agent against which to resist, an uncertainty as to a process through which to take organised or even individual action for repossession and the trend for community members and communities to be affected differently by the project, be this a reflection of location along the pipeline, proximity to the pipeline within the village, gender, age, political connections or ethnic heritage.

My analysis of local engagements of structural violence performs two important tasks. The first is to engage directly with a principal criticism of the theory of structural violence as vague and capacious, to the point of rendering violence ubiquitous. Loïc Wacquant (2004) argues that work on structural violence disregards particular distinctions and historical variations of divergent forms of injustice. By rooting my analysis in a particular time and place, structural violence, I argue, is a

powerful conceptual framework for illustrating the intersections between discrete patterns of social violence, including the ways in which different forms of violence are compounded as they are experienced in everyday life. In *Article V, A Triad of Structural Violence*, I outline my triad of structural violence—comprised of infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence and institutionalized structural violence—as a means to identify multiple actors and structurally violent mechanisms through which poverty and inequality are produced within discrete spaces and territories.

The second task is to enrich the scholarship of structural violence with narratives of the people who live amidst structurally violent forces. A significant outcome of a focus on the connections between local interpretations of structural violence and resistance practices is the demonstration that structural violence is not an all-dominating structure (in a purely structuralist sense). Instead, violence is enormously entangled and complicated and, moreover, people navigate, resist and acquiesce in complex ways.

Finally, the study has implications for the scholarship on structural violence, particularly in rethinking the impetus of ‘bringing violence into view’. Such assertions, I argue, are premised in a teleology that privileges the visible and, often, the visible as spectated by a particular audience, where the reasoning is that representation will lead to actions taken to cease forms of structural violence. Rather than emphasising the need to *render visible* structural forms of violence, I explore the notion that space and place are central to the construction of what is, in fact, an *illusion of invisibility*—one that enables the perpetuation of the very structural violence it endeavours to challenge. Exposing this illusion of invisibility is important for several reasons: firstly, it emphasises the need to rework the ways in which

structural violence is *acutely visible but spatially and imaginatively normalised*. Privileged communities are, I assert, spatially disciplined to not ‘see’ structural violence but this violence is never invisible. Rather, blindness is produced through a set of instruments, techniques and procedures in spaces that profit from the socio-political relationships and economic configurations of structural violence. These communities are spatially and imaginatively distanced from those places and people affected by structural violence.

Secondly, the notion in academia that it is imperative for scholars, activists and/or artists to bring structural violence into view in order for us to ‘change the system’ misses out on other ways in which this violence is already understood in communities living in their midst. This focus also privileges the view of the scholar-activist, who is positioned as the knower endowed with the (moralised) capacity to expose violence.

Finally, this approach exposes the ways in which a focus on *rendering visible* is compatible with the current focus within corporate-led transparency initiatives, which similarly focus on rendering visible. In these transparency initiatives, visibility often becomes a discursive tool in the perpetuation of structural violence as the realm of the visible continues to be ordered, selected and dominated by corporate and state actors. Instead, a more useful approach would be an insistence on *seeing* and *feeling* (including the refusal to endorse the academic privileging of emotional distance through ‘unfeeling’ analysis) in the resolve not to endorse the normalisation of highly visible suffering by describing it as unseen or invisible.

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Survey of Literatures Decolonial Thought and the Geographies of Violence & Resistance

Overview

In this section, I review literatures on decolonial thought, structural violence, geographies of violence and geographies of resistance, centring my focus on elucidating how a consideration of these literatures in tandem assists in producing a holistic understanding of narratives and experiences along the pipeline. As each discrete article of the thesis contains its own specific literature review (e.g., the detailed examinations of urban/rural resistances in *Article IV* or literatures on witchcraft and development in *Article III*), I concentrate here on outlining the project's broadly informed literary framework. Combining three divergent literatures in particular—(i) the literatures on decolonial thinking and praxis; (ii) the literatures from Peace Studies scholars, human geographers and scholar-activists on structural violence; and (iii) the literatures on geographies and practices of resistance—we bridge gaps between structure and agency to show that neither structural violence nor resistance is straightforwardly teleological processes.

Why a decolonial approach?

In 1979, the Nigerian political scientist, Claude Ake, urged scholars to resist the 'academic imperialism' of the northern (Euro-American) social sciences. Ten years later the Vietnamese feminist and cultural critic, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989: 68), denounced anthropology as 'scientific gossip', writing, 'Anthropology is finally better defined as "gossip" (we speak together about others) than as "conversation" (we discuss a question [all together])'. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a reconfiguration of social science epistemologies and ontologies, in which the privileged position of the researcher vis-à-vis the researched was upended and the geo-politics of knowledge, i.e., the spaces where knowledge is created and the means by which it is legitimated, became central. Simultaneously, the monolithic notion of 'the field'—as a fixed, bounded and 'local' site removed from larger socio-political and spatial relations—was unsettled (e.g., the 'multilocal' in Marcus and Fischer 1986).

The considerable body of multidisciplinary scholarship that emerged during this period, although each a distinct intellectual project, similarly emphasised that linear

modernist theory, with its origins in the European Enlightenment, does not sufficiently account for past or contemporary histories, realities and understandings of the world. The objectivism and positivism of the sciences (also known as ‘scientism’) was deconstructed and revealed to be an illusion—a ‘false consciousness’ that conceals the ‘connection[s] of knowledge[-making] and [other] interest[s]’ (Habermas 1968: 315 and 317). The illusion of objectivism provided the socio-cultural imagination necessary for the expansion of the Western empire through the naturalising of particular ideologies of racialised, classed, gendered and sexual hierarchies. The disciplines of geography, anthropology, theology and political philosophy—firmly rooted in the illusion of objectivism and positivism—had provided the spatial, intellectual, moral and legal frameworks for exploitation, violence and genocide of the Indigenous peoples of the majority world through the colonial project (Ake 1979; Minh-ha 1989; Blaut 1993; Mignolo 2000). Gloria Anzaldúa (1999: 59) argues that the objectification and thingification performed through the scientism of people by Western culture is the ‘root of all violence’. Coming to terms with and transforming the colonial legacy of an intellectual false consciousness of scientism and honouring those knowledge(s) formerly cast as inferior or non-scientific—what Michel Foucault (1972: 81-85) calls ‘subjugated knowledges’—were (and are) the intellectual tasks at hand. More than being subjugated, Francis Nyamnjoh (2012a: 129) has since written about the ‘real or attempted epistemicide’ of African knowledge(s) during the colonial project. He describes epistemicide as the ‘decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of that of the conqueror’ through the imposition of colonial ways of knowing (Nyamnjoh 2012a:

129).¹

The concise synopsis of this historically rich and analytically dense intellectual work here provides some background on efforts to ‘demystify modernity’ so as to expose its limited ways of knowing (Mignolo 2011). There is an encouraging number of intellectual projects that emerge with a similar root focus to deconstruct, question and challenge the scientism through which the intellectual domination of modernity is established and maintained, including Africana thought, Black Radical thought, third wave feminism, postcolonial and subaltern studies, Indigenous Studies, decolonial thought, among others.

Here, I explore three diverse, complementary and sometimes contradictory projects on knowing violence, resistance and peace: (i) the literatures on decolonial thinking and praxis; (ii) the literatures from Peace Studies scholars, human geographers and scholar-activists on structural violence; and (iii) the literatures on geographies and practices of resistance. This survey of literature provides some background on how work towards an engaged and accountable way of knowing, one that endeavours to centre respectfully the words and wisdoms of those people in Nanga and Kribi, at the same time that I acknowledge the limitations of such a project.

While my analysis is not exhaustive, it shows that these paradigms share some similar intellectual genealogies and struggles. I have decided to frame this project as ‘decolonial’ in an effort to fuse my work with an attentiveness to emergent topographies and perspectives from the global South and the formerly communist block of Eastern Europe, during a time when we are witnessing wide-ranging

¹ I address ‘epistemicide’ and epistemological dispossession in much greater detail in the first article of this thesis, *Searching for a Decolonising Ethos Beyond the ‘Language of the Mouth’*.

geopolitical shifts away from Euro-American dominance amidst continuing globalised racial, gendered and class inequalities. At the same time, we have witnessed a reinvigoration of scientism as neoliberalism, corporate influence and the *military-industrial-academic complex* increasingly orient and commodify university departments,² research designs and academic publications (Giroux 2006) and as African universities have become increasingly ‘market-oriented and capital-friendly’ through the ‘enclosure of knowledge’ under neoliberal economic reforms since the 1980s (Mamdani 2007: vii; also Walsh 2007). In this context, there is a push to *go beyond* the critique of scientism, neoliberal modernity or Eurocentrism. Efforts to go beyond critique centre on the need to offer alternative conceptualisations and understandings of power, politics, resistance, ecology and agency; these other ways of knowing are critical to the project of dismantling a neoliberal global capitalism that propagates a complex and capacious chain of structural violence.³

Decolonial thought emphasises (i) the intersections between academic research, colonialism and power; (ii) the decisiveness of emplacement and consciousness in the geo-politics of knowledge; and (iii) the need for an engaged, collaborative and qualitative research approach capable of providing avenues for meaning-making that might be useful for the communities upon which our projects are centred. My engagement with these approaches provides a groundwork for a decolonial—and in this case geographical—ethos.

² Noel Castree (2000), for example, outlines the ‘academicisation’ and ‘professionalisation’ of radical geography under the constraints of academic labour within the neoliberal transformation of higher education. David Harvey (2006: 410) critiques the role of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the institutionalization of standardized work requirements in the neoliberalised university, where there has been an, ‘upsurge in publication rates and a corresponding downturn in substantive work’—in other words, the structure of the university forces workers to ‘publish [faster, faster and even faster]-or-perish’.

³ Structural violence is defined below.

Critical political geography and a decolonial direction

In Cameroon, my presence as a white American geographer has significant historical and political implications.⁴ I work in places where the first white women were Christian missionaries, the spouses of missionaries and the spouses of charter company employees. In the 1700s, British Baptist missionaries settled permanently in Limbe (at the time Victoria), on the coast of Cameroon and by the 1870s, American Presbyterian missionaries established their settlement at Grand Batanga, where today the underground Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline extends beneath the Atlantic Ocean to the project's offloading vessel. These missionaries and charter company employees prepared the landscape for colonialism: they set up permanent trading posts with guns and cannons that would facilitate the violent appropriation of African people and resources. They established the missionary schools that would educate people in European languages and ready them for brutal and often forced colonial labour. After the territory of Cameroon was declared a German protectorate in July 1884, missionaries collaborated closely with colonialists to execute colonial policies and missionary education became an important tool in cultivating Western political values, ways of life, languages and worldviews. These early white women, as such, were extensions of the colonial project.

In this context, how might I contribute to and collaborate in a project of decolonisation, particularly as a white researcher in the discipline of Geography, which itself remains predominantly white and male, particularly at the level of tenure or full professorship (McDowell 1990; Kobayashi 2002; Mahtani 2006; Pulido 2002)?

⁴ This is not to say that a black, Latino/a or Asian geographer would not face equally pressing issues of uneven power and privilege. Moreover, literature on the socially constructedness of race and its links to relations of power and processes of struggle has exposed whiteness as a historically constructed practice of racial power, not a biologically determined indicator. Race is 'real' in that it has tangible, material and unequal affects on people's lifescapes, identities, relationships and life chances.

Are the tools of the discipline sufficient for the task, particularly as institutionalised racialisation pushes non-white geographers to the margins and the discipline itself requires decolonisation? Lawrence D. Berg (2012: 510) asserts, ‘geography is one of the whitest social science disciplines in Euro-American academia’ and Caputo argues that geography continues to ‘cling at a certain level... to a colonial view of the world’ (Caputo 2000: 21). The genealogies of geography are deeply imbedded in the colonial appropriation of Indigenous knowledges and the re-construction of Indigenous places through early expeditions and extensive mapping activities (Myers 1998; Mercer et al. 2003). At the same time, scholars working within the discipline of Geography have been critical of the politics of knowledge creation in the field (Katz 1994; Kobayashi 1994; Mahtani 2006; Pulido 2002), particularly those who work under the auspices of critical political geography. Kallio et al. (2014: 425) define critical political geography, not as a subfield, but as

...multi-dimensional discussion where human geographers and scholars from neighboring disciplines debate politically and geographically relevant topical issues, approaches and theories with critical attitudes.

Cindi Katz (1994: 70), for example, addresses issues of power and unease during her fieldwork, reflecting on the politics of ethnographic research in Sudan, a space that is far from her home country of the United States. She contends, ‘I felt somewhat compelled to work where I lived and live where I worked’ (Katz 1994: 70). Two decades after these reflections from Katz, what conceptual tools, approaches, ethics and understandings are available for a not-formerly-colonised, privileged, white, Anglo-American researcher to address colonial histories, coloniality and power imbalances in Cameroon (in ways that not only do not *harm*, but which might contribute to the project of decolonising knowledge)? One avenue that I work towards is a decolonial ethic.

A genealogy of decolonial thought

Decoloniality emerged amongst Latin Americanists from the intellectual energies of the Bandung Conference and debates around dependency theory as an alternative (a ‘third way’) to capitalism and communism, both of which were firmly rooted in European epistemologies. It engages with and builds from philosophies of liberation, Freirean pedagogies of the oppressed, Latin American dependency theory, Chicano/a experience, Chicana feminisms, Afro-indigenous cosmologies (such as gnosis) and Black Radical Traditions. Decolonial thinking is an interdisciplinary effort to decolonise the hegemonic knowledge production rooted in an Eurocentric epistemology that arose during the European Renaissance. Decolonial knowledge-making is a project to delink knowing from the exploitative, hierarchical and colonial matrix of imperial and modern power known as ‘coloniality’ (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2009: 20; Walsh 2009: 229).

The Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano’s (1989; 2000) triad of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality sets the tone for decolonial thinking by exposing the modern colonial system. In his 1989 article, *Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad*, Quijano positions the creation of race within the conquering and plundering of Latin America in 1492, which paved the way for the ‘modernisation’ of Western Europe (to which I would add, the conquering and exploitation of Africa; and to which, Maria Lugones (2008), powerfully asserts the centrality of the coloniality of gender in establishing colonialism). Marxist theorists have similarly explored the continued perseverance of capitalism through the constant spatial and labour (re)appropriations in and of global ‘frontier zones’. The decolonial project begins with a recognition that colonial and genocidal violence were *essential* to the modernisation of the West and that that violence is the ‘darker side of western

modernity’ (Mignolo 2011). What is more, coloniality did not stop following decolonisation but continues in a ‘transformed [...] outer form—a living legacy, visible in the social structures of the postcolony’ (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992: 550). This is what Quijano calls the ‘coloniality of power’, or the oppressive power structures that systematically disenfranchise formerly colonised and enslaved peoples through systems of hierarchies, systems of knowledge and systems of culture. The ‘coloniality of power’ did not cease with decolonisation; its legacies continue in the ‘colonial/modern patriarchal/capitalist world-system’ (Quijano 2000; Escobar, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decolonial thought (or, decoloniality) is a critique of the ‘coloniality of power’. The ‘epistemic decolonial turn’—as elaborated upon by Walter Mignolo (2000), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2006), Ramón Grosfoguel (2007)—is distinct from the diverse projects of postcolonialism, Area Studies, feminism and political-economy in its emphasis on privileging non-Western theorists as well as for its centralisation of race and racism as ‘*the* organizing principle that structures all of the multiple hierarchies of the world-system’ (italics added, Grosfoguel 2007: 217).

Mary Gilmartin’s (2009) provocative engagement with Walter Mignolo’s work on ‘border thinking’ in her analysis of struggles against the construction of a Shell gas pipeline in Rosport, Ireland provides a useful framework for political geographers interested in integrating the sub-discipline into on-going conversations on decolonising knowledge creation (my use of *creation* instead of *production* is an intentional means to distance intellectual projects from capital-centric ontologies). Gilmartin (2009: 279) writes, ‘I propose that political geography aim...for “an other perspective”’. She emphasises that, ‘the disruption of the global/local binary does not serve to reinstate the local as a privileged locus of knowledge. Rather, its aim is to

recognize the particular power relations and spatial imaginaries of specific local histories and geographies' (Gilmartin 2009: 277).

Decoloniality features a diverse set of ethics, each of which are part of the systematic rejection of Eurocentrism and the search for more egalitarian, pluriversal universals. The practices I discuss below build towards my understanding of a decolonial ethos as: (i) embracing pluriversalism (and an incumbent rejection of 'Truth') that entails 'shifting the geography of reason', (ii) an attentiveness to indigenous cosmologies and ancestral knowledges and (iii) a centring of life and healing.

(i) A pluriversalism that entails 'shifting the geography of reason'.

Central to demystifying modernity's hegemony on knowledge legitimisation is the recognition that place matters greatly in knowledge creation. Mignolo argues that making the *conscious place* of knowledge generation explicit is a means to decolonise modernity's epistemic and fictitious 'hubris of the zero point' that is so central to the rhetoric of universality (Castro-Gómez 2007). So that, 'rather than assuming that thinking comes before being, one assumes instead that it is a racially marked body in a geo-historical marked space that feels the urge to get the call to speak, to articulate, in whatever semiotic system' (Mignolo 2009: 2). This place where one thinks, where one theorises, is not a physical or geographical space per se (it is not, for example, an office or a town); it is a place 'that has been configured by the colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo 2011: xvi). He continues, 'The point... is not where you *reside* but where you *dwell*. Césaire and Fanon... dwelled in the history of the Middle Passage, of the plantations, of slavery and of the runaway slaves' (Mignolo 2011: xiii). A similar notion is posited by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1987), who distinguishes between a 'location as one inherits it and active, strategic positioning' (Kaplan 1990:

26). In this paradigm, *where we dwell* is a deliberate and mindful place-making process; in short, our place of dwelling is our consciousness.

(ii) An attentiveness to Indigenous cosmologies and ancestral knowledges.

The decolonisation of knowledge draws upon an incorporation of non-Eurocentric understandings for the formation of ‘a broader canon of thought’ (Grosfoguel 2008: 2). This includes ‘epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual *spaces and bodies*’ (italics added, Grosfoguel 2008: 2) as a way to dignify ‘those ways of living, thinking and sensing that were violently devalued or demonized by colonial, imperial and interventionist agendas as well as by postmodern and altermodern internal critiques’ (*Transnational Decolonial Institute* Editorial Board 2011). Decolonialists insist on the importance of referencing indigenous and southern intellectuals and cosmologies in their work (Walsh 2009). This is an important distinction between decolonialists and postcolonialists, the latter having been heavily influenced by European deconstruction and postmodern theorists, particularly Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. Grosfoguel, in a similar vein, criticises Latin American Subaltern Studies in the United States for being firmly rooted in epistemological and intellectual projects of the United States. He writes:

Despite their attempt at producing a radical and alternative knowledge, they reproduced the epistemic schema of Area Studies in the United States. With a few exceptions, they produced studies *about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective. Like the imperial epistemology of Area Studies, theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are located in the South. This colonial epistemology was crucial to my dissatisfaction with the project (italics added, Grosfoguel 2008: 1).

In this way, (mainstream) postcolonialism is a post-Eurocentric praxis that opens up occasions for new ways of theorising but whose intellectual ancestors, language and

institutions remain positioned in the western canon and Euro-America. Recent contributions on the importance of ‘southern theory’ (Connell 2007) or ‘theory from the south’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012),⁵ for example, might be more about mainstreaming the study of the South or about making a space for southern theory within the western canon. Decoloniality urges us to seek radical decolonial anti-capitalist diversities founded on experiences and languages of anti-capitalism, anti-patriarchalism and anti-imperialism, so as to initiate a diverse socialisation of power (Grosfoguel 2008). This is a political project towards the creation of alternate social and power structures. The Comaroffs (2012), on the other hand, argue for a historical, grounded and precise theory of the South because doing so has theoretical meaning for the global future and the global North. They argue, ‘the history of the present reveals itself more starkly in the antipodes’ and that theory from the South is meaningful in understandings of capital flows, relationships between capital and government, forms of inequality and exploitative accumulation that are ‘evolving’ northward (Comaroff and Comaroff 7: 2012). They contend that the North increasingly resembles the South in rates of inequality, income disparities and structural violence and that the ‘Euro-America is evolving toward Africa’; the

⁵ This includes Jean and John Comaroff’s (2012) *Theory from The South Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* and Raewyn Connell’s (2007) *Southern Methods*. The features of theory from the South explored here emerged from critical theory and constructivism, both of which advance alternatives to the positivist and post-positivist schools of thought: reality is fluid, changing, plastic and, as with constructivism, multiple. The intentions of theory from the South are to build and sustain a more inclusive theoretical project, one that includes substantial contributions from the South. Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (2007: vii) describes the project as one that ‘ground[s] knowledge of society in other experiences’ to bring about real world change. She urges us to seek out alternate ‘sources of intellectual authority in the present’ and to ‘dialogue with ideas produced by the colonised world’ (italics original, 2007: xi). A substantial portion of her book, *Southern Theory*, is a genealogical endeavour to trace the origins of critical southern theories from Latin America, Africa, the Pacific and the Middle East. Richard Miskolci (2012: 6) points out, however, that ‘her critique lacks deep contact with the local realities in which these southern theories were created, in the context of a privileged dialogue between the socio-economic elites of the South and those of the Northern Atlantic... it [also] pays little attention to the interests raised by the third great inflection in the history of knowledge regarding the social: the insurgency of subjugated knowledge that began in the 1960s’.

suggestion is that this evolutionary path is better characterised as a devolving (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 1-50). However, what this seems to do is subjugate theory from Africa: in this theoretical paradigm, Africa continues to be valuable for its ability to illuminate social realities in Euro-America, which remains firmly in the centre. To put it another way, the limitation of theory from the South has been its emphasis on exporting southern theory to the North, i.e., the implicit notion that southern theory is crucial inasmuch as it says something about ‘our’ contemporary global moment (with global tending to refer to a global North or ‘globalised’ urban). All the while this literature is ontologically grounded in northern theories, with a relative absence of theorists working *in* and *from* the south. Instead, decolonialists work to ‘de-link’ from Western thought and orient towards pluriversality and heterogeneous structural-histories as ‘other-universalit[ies]’ (Mignolo 2007). Part of de-linking involves a turn towards geo- and body-politics.

Although this ‘de-linking’ is, in practice, quite challenging given the hegemony of Euro- and Anglo-dominance of intellectual projects, particularly the uneven geopolitical patterns of ‘expert’ knowledge as established through a theoretical canon. Theories evolve from, within and without of previous and present knowledge projects; so that the genealogies of thought (including critical strands thereof) arise from conversations with and in response to previous or other ongoing strands of thought in complex and simultaneously unfolding patterns. So much so, it is inherently challenging to discuss decolonial thought without discussing postcolonial theory, anti-colonial scholarship, Area Studies or critical social theory. Yet, the application of Euro-American Leftist or critical theory to African people and places (e.g., using Foucault’s notion of governmentality to understand politics and power in Kribi, Cameroon) risks perpetuating cultural imperialism. Edward Said’s (1981) *Covering*

Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We see the Rest of the World critiques the institutional cultural imperialism of Euro-American academia and the role of (mostly but not exclusively white and male) liberal elites in promoting neocolonial projects in the Middle East.

It should not be a surprise that the continued Euro-American theoretical monologue, on-going and increasing imperialism led by the Northern Atlantic, geographic subjugation, racial discrimination (in and out of the university) and uneven global power configurations generate a mistrust and even a deep dislike of whiteness or white researchers, particularly when black colleagues, friends and family members continue to be pigeonholed by knowledge systems that perpetuate symbolic and cultural violence to render unseen and deplete the humanity and dignity of African people (Nyamnjoh 2012b: 78).⁶ Athi Mongezeleli Joja and Andile Mngxitama (2013: 7)—in a reflection on the now public e-mail correspondence between Heinrich Bohmke and John Comaroff in which Comaroff advised the editor that Bohmke's publication be pulled⁷—argue that, 'the first act of building a radical

⁶ My point is not to be divisive or confrontational here; it is to scrutinise the 'black anger and white obliviousness' noted by To Molefe (2012)—although I should note that I do not limit my analysis to a dialectical interpretation of otherwise broader and more complex emotions and histories—as a means of moving forward, collectively. These issues have been heatedly debated in the universities of South Africa and the United States. See, for example, the reflections on race and racial politics in academia triggered by Philip Curtin's (1995) article on the so-called 'ghettoizing [of] African history', particularly the responses of Micere Mugo (1996) and David Johnson (1996); or the heated debates sparked by Samantha Vice's (2010) reflections on whiteness, privilege and silence in South Africa; and Francis Nyamanjoh's (2012b) critique of South African anthropology as racially exclusionary and performative.

⁷ In 2012, Heinrich Bohmke published an essay entitled, 'The Social Movement Hustle' in the *Harvard International Review's* 'Youth on Fire' Issue. The essay focuses on the 'enormous ideological and logistical influence by university-based mentors' in the study and perception of the so-called 'new social movements' of South Africa (Bohmke 2012: 52). These university-based mentors, Bohmke argues, 'were involved in producing 'false knowledge about how radical and powerful these movements are while simultaneously facilitating their contraction, political moderation, and irrelevance (Bohmke 2012: 52). One day after the publication of the article, it was pulled following an email from John Comaroff to the journal's editor. In the email, he characterised Bohmke's piece as 'inaccurate', 'disturbing', and 'scurrilous' to the point of 'endangering the good standing of... Harvard University' (Bohmke/Comaroff e-mail correspondence). Bohmke argues that the episode uncovers a

black project depends to a large extent on the expulsion of white liberals from the war-torn room' because 'white engagement in our struggle has produced only one outcome: benefit for them and defeat for ourselves'.

Decoloniality asserts that all knowledge is rooted in places and in bodies of sensation and experience. As long as non-dominant ontologies and epistemologies remain ignored, abstracted, appropriated or exported, sincere dialogue—sincere solidarity—will remain chimerical. Nyamnjoh calls for a new sort of theory that entails a serious and significant effort at 'co-birth' or co-production in our scholarship. Drawing from the French notion of *connaissance*, meaning comprehension but literally translating as co-birth, Nyamnjoh advocates 'a form of being "born with" the other [through] experiential knowing and shared insight' (Nyamnjoh 2012b: 67). He quotes from René Devisch to illustrate that this interpretation of *connaissance*

offers an insightful linguistic rendition of the sensual, intercorporeal, dialogical and non-appropriative comprehending and co-implication of subjects and their life-worlds. It is the mode of reception and encounter in which the anthropologist is engaged by virtue of the sensory, emotional and thus corporeal or 'fleshy' sensing of, and co-implication in, the significant inter-animating features of life-world and subjects (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 2012b: 67).

Such co-production might be understood through a paradigm of intellectual relationship or intellectual friendship. This intellectual friendship stands in opposition to what Todd May (2012) calls the 'entrepreneurial relationships' that we construct and maintain in the hopes of a return (as in a capitalist or materialist relationship). Instead, a co-productive or co-birthing intellectual friendship is founded on trust and

dangerous academic gatekeeping, in which certain knowledge is privileged and other knowledge is silenced. Joja's and Mngxitama's (2013) interpretation of and commentaries on the event reveal how such encounters illicit echoes of dissatisfaction with white academics and seem to reveal a heritage of racial power and privilege inherited through colonialism, apartheid and institutionalised racial inequality.

honesty that engenders reinventions or re-articulations of oneself: a state of being re-born with another through our *mutual* constitution. A focus on communally based (or partner-driven) knowledge has potentials for developing alternative modes of knowledge creation potentially capable of challenging the individualising logic of neoliberal capitalism (May 2012).

Mignolo (2000) stresses the need to incorporate the material, corporeal knowledges (geo- and body-politics of knowledge) that have been excluded from the production of knowledge in modernity. I use a decolonial lens to disengage from dominant liberal readings of the pipeline, which are underpinned with Eurocentric notions of the primacy of market mechanisms, individualism and quantified human rights (Grosvogui and Leonard 2007). The liberal understandings of the pipeline (as evidenced through World Bank and oil consortium documentations and reports) struggle to engage with people's varied and diverse ontologies, epistemologies and narratives of structural violence and, therefore such readings dismiss people's concerns and accounts of structural violence as incoherent or lacking proof (*World Bank Management Response in Cameroon* 2002: 47-52).

(iii) Centring life and healing.

Decolonialists firmly centre life (human, animal, plant) in their work. This differentiates decolonialists from more conventional scholarship, in which 'transformation of the disciplines' is too often the central focus (Mignolo 2009: 20). Juan García argues for the building of 'a collective sense of belonging, an unlearning of what the dominant society has inculcated and a relearning of past and present ancestral knowledge, a focus on [...] work that needs to be done *within*' a given community (italics added, qtd. in Walsh 2009: 231). In his engagement with Linda T.

Smith's work on Indigenous methodologies, Mignolo writes, she 'engage[s] in knowledge-making to "advance" the Maori cause rather than to "advance" the discipline (e.g. anthropology)' (2009: 14). Decoloniality, in this way, is a project of healing, dignifying and 'advancing' a community, not a discipline.

What remains somewhat obscure is the place of the not-formerly colonised, privileged white Anglo-American scholar who engages or wishes to engage in the decolonial project. Mignolo's emphasis on *dwelling*, for example, would seem to include those who reside and theorise (physically) in the North but do so *with* the South—so that the intellectual and the intellectual project is positioned within an ethical and political ethos of decoloniality. Chandra Mohanty asks: '*how* does one locate oneself?' (italics added, qtd. in Kaplan 1990: 26). The intellectual, rather than being reduced to some 'essential origin' is consciously positioned within an ethical and political orientation towards decolonisation.

Mignolo makes a distinction between the methodological compass and capability of the decolonial scholar who studies inside his/her community and the scholar who does not. He writes, 'I am not saying that a Maori anthropologist has epistemic privileges over a New Zealand anthropologist of Anglo-descent (or a British or US anthropologist). I am saying that a New Zealand anthropologist of Anglo descent *has no right* to guide the "locals" in what is good for bad for the Maori population' (Mignolo 2009: 14). Does this mean that it is equally 'not the place' of the decolonial scholar to intervene in Euro-American communities to which s/he does not 'belong'? It seems that we risk falling down a perilous and dangerous hole of inertia or a self-silencing that is contrary to the political project of decoloniality. What does it mean to 'advance' a community? Is it ever the place of the academic to 'speak for' any 'community' (is this in some ways an echoing of Eurocentric thinking

that positions and empowers the academic elite over the ‘masses’)? In my project, I work from a political and ethical consciousness without making claims of advancing the communities of Nanga and Kribi. While the decolonisation of knowledge occurs from scholars based in the South and the North, the ‘decolonial option’ exposes limitations of the latter, including how our belonging to a place or ‘community’ informs our ethical approach (Escobar 2008; Grosfoguel 2008). At the same time, scholars have identified the limits and dangers of overemphasising the potential for non-Eurocentric alternatives and imaginaries based upon identity politics, Watts (1999: 91), for example critiques the anti-development work of Arturo Escobar:

Identity politics is championed by Escobar, for example, because it represents part of an alternative reservoir of knowledge and because such ideas stand against the ‘axiomatistics of capitalism’. But there is surely nothing necessarily anti-capitalist or particularly progressive about cultural identity: calls to localism can produce Hindu fascism as easily as Andean Indian co-operatives.

Efforts to *move beyond critique* towards alternate conceptions of power, violence and oppression must be modest and not sentimentalised, as I illustrate in *Article III* (herein) on the paradox of epistemologies and practices of witchcraft along the pipeline. The incorporation of body-politics works to effect an ‘epistemic disobedience’ of the non-Eurocentric semiotic code (Mignolo 2009). Knowledges are located in the body in a way that allows the ‘affects, emotions, desires, anger and humiliations’, traditionally left out of Western social sciences, to emerge as legitimate ways of knowing (Mignolo 2009: 19). This approach is evocative of the work of Fanon (1952: 206), who closes *Black Skin, White Masks* by affirming, ‘O my body, makes of me always a man who questions!’ This approach is not meant to ‘simplify indigenous or black thought or relegate it to the category or status of localized, situated, and culturally specific and concrete thinking’ (Walsh 2009: 231); instead, it

is a demand to recognise and respect the importance of the physical, the material and the emotional in structuring understandings of people and place.

Geographies of structural violence

At the centre of this study are the processes of structural violence that accompanied the construction and continue to evolve along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, through the narratives of the people who live along it. There are shifting, overlapping and intertwining relationships between the structural violence experienced every day and the creative and active resistances of communities that unfold alongside it. In the context of the pipeline, I illuminate key operations of the nexus of systemic violence that influence the tendency for resistance struggles to be quiet and to be enacted, as James Scott (1990) would say, ‘offstage’ or, as bell hooks (1990) would say, in the ‘homeplace’.

There is a dominant focus in both the media as well as the academy on episodic, physical and psychological violence(s), i.e., violence that has concrete beginnings and endings as well as identifiable agents. Much of the work on the geography of violence, as well as the anthropology of violence, has historically focused on military domination, imperialism, colonialism and other direct forms of violence, including sexual, gendered, acute, physical and genocidal violence (Benedikt et al. 2010; Weidmann 2011). This somewhat restricted focus, one in which intentional, acute, physical and objective violence(s) are the predominant representational forms has been mirrored by preoccupations in the media and government policy on criminality, terror, war, unrest and conflict. Slavoj Žižek (2009: 55) critiques this dominant narrative, writing, ‘The highest form of violence is the imposition of the standard with reference to which some events appear as “violent”’ and some, albeit violent as well,

remain unidentified as such. So often structural violence, arguably the most prevalent and widespread form of contemporary violence in our contemporary moment, has remained generally unrecognised (particularly in privileged spaces) or resigned to the margins (in scholarly literature) with acknowledgements only of its role in creating the context for acute violence. This marginal position has shifted in the last five years or so, during which we have seen a plethora of interdisciplinary publications building from Galtung's theory of structural violence.

The concept of structural violence dates back to Johan Galtung's (1969) work on social position theory, in which he worked to develop a holistic lens to study social inequality. Galtung, influenced by Latin American liberation theologians, broadened the conceptual lens of violence, arguing that the dominant focus on direct violence is a restricted focus that leaves out the structures that frame physical violence. He defined structural violence as 'those factors that cause people's actual physical and mental realizations to be below their potential realizations', this includes an understanding of the complex mechanisms of uneven patterns of capital accumulation, which unevenly distribute entitlements and privileges, on the one hand, and disaster and disease, on the other (Galtung 1969: 168). Žižek (2009: 1) describes it as the violence that remains unremarked, covered as it is in a sense of normality within the 'smooth functioning of our economic and political systems'. Economic exploitation and abandonment are centrepieces of these violent structures, often euphemistically referred to as 'unequal exchange' and 'underdevelopment.' Drawing on the scholarship of structural violence (Farmer 2000, 2004; Nixon 2011); the decolonial literature on colonial violence (Mignolo 2000, 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013); the work on geographies of violence (Peluso and Watts 2001; Tyner 2012); and the spatial practices of violence (Swyngedouw 2001;

Daley 2007), I situate my analysis of the oil pipeline within a colonial political economy that is characterised by a nexus of pervasive structural violence.

An understanding of violence as including the nonphysical realm has had tremendous impacts on subsequent understandings, so that ‘the destruction of home and humanity, of hope and future, of valued traditions and the integrity of community’ constitute forms of violence (Nordstrom qtd. in Peluso and Watts 2001: 29). Human geographers have demonstrated how place is made ‘real’ through human-nature interactions and, as James Tyner (*italics original*, 2012: 168) argues,

violence not only *takes place*, but violence is *part of place*, [so] that violence and place are iterative... violence contributes to the production of place, and that place is foundational to the practice of violence.

Nancy Peluso and Michael Watt’s (2001: 30) approach to violence, in their study of environmental violence and the political ecology of violence, through the lens of political ecology is helpful in establishing violence as a ‘site-specific phenomenon deeply rooted in local histories and social relations but also connected to transitional processes of material change, political power relations, and historical conjuncture’.

Rob Nixon’s (2011) notion of ‘slow violence’ emphasises the broad temporal and spatial operations of structural violence. Nixon employs the term as a means of highlighting the slow moving mutations of ecological damage and disaster that accompany large-scale projects like Shell oil extraction in the Niger Delta and Union Carbide’s explosion in Bhopal. Nixon (2011: 6-10) explains that, ‘time becomes an actor’ in the operations of, in this case, environmental violence. In so writing he identifies a primary means through which structural violence remains so often illusive and undefined as such: structural violence is slow violence, indeed slow to the point of seeming permanence. Mathew Sparke (2004) writes similarly of the ‘silent’ violence(s) traceable through global inequalities. In this context, violence ‘happens

within complex structures and at the end of the long, highly ramified causal chains and cycles’ and as such is difficult to represent, due to its temporally and spatially diffuse nature (Žižek 2009: 39).

This literature provides a powerful framework through which to engage with the oil pipeline; however, as Akhil Gupta (2013: 20) aptly demonstrates, Galtung’s focus on structural violence was devoted to ‘outcomes [and] not... processes. Whenever outcomes are unequal, violence is present’. The inherent paradox of the theory is that, within our current intellectual framework and our contemporary neoliberal moment, it is immensely difficult to imagine what socio-political and economic system would bring about full equality, without evidence of violence (or, a society composed of total positive peace, to echo Galtung’s (1969) now well-known maxim that, ‘the absence of war does not mean peace’). In a decolonial project that endeavours to *move beyond* critique (or beyond the further elucidation of structural violence) towards the development of alternatives, the task is to look towards people’s understandings and practices of undermining and challenging the system through the myriad practices of struggle, resistance and living amid structural violence.

Resisting, struggling and getting by: geographies of resistance

Part of expanding the conversation on structural violence involves an understanding of how such violence is felt, experience and understood on the ground. Here, I consider resistance and struggle through the literature on the geographies of resistance, including: theoretical debates about the tendency to romanticise resistance (Joseph 2002; Katz 2004; Sparke 2008); the danger of employing ideas of a possessive individualism (reflective of the global North) in discussions on dispossession and repossession (Farmer 2004; McCauley 2006); the structural

determinism of interpreting resistance as reaction to an external phenomenon instead of a self-propelled action (Pile 2000; Rose 2002; Gibson-Graham 2006; Žižek 2009); the possibilities for discrimination and silencing within resistance movements (Routledge et al. 1997; Pile 2000; Sparke 2008); and whether to consider ‘unintentional’ forms of resistance (Scott 1985, 1990; Mackenzie 2010) or to interpret such as acquiescence to the system (Michell 1990; Tiskata 2009).

James Scott (1985: 35) writes extensively on the resistances played out and employed in everyday life, identifying ‘foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson [and] sabotage’ as weapons of resistance for disempowered groups. Everyday resistance, Scott writes, requires no coordination or planning: it ‘avoid[s] any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority’ and, as such, can be interpreted as a genre of ‘self-help’ (Scott 1985: 28). These expressions have alternately been termed, ‘creative acts of resistant “self-fashioning”’ (Sharp et al., 2000: 3). Such forms of resistance are not characterised by mass movements or visible demonstration; instead, it is the ‘prosaic but constant struggle [over] work, food, autonomy [and] ritual’ (Scott 1985: 28). Scott’s analysis is important in identifying both indirect and direct forms of resistance. However, some have been critical of his work as overly stressing the everyday and casting a dangerous, and equally demeaning, understanding of the poor as conforming to systems of domination and ‘ignor[ing] the evidence of hegemony’ (Tiskata 2009: 19). The importance of gender relations are also lacking from his analysis. While problematic, Scott’s conceptualisation of the politics inherent in the realm of the everyday remains an essential component to understanding agency in the current age of global capital economy. Resistance acts are revealed in everyday social interactions like mistrust, jealousy, self-censorship, sibling banter, teasing, belittling,

exaggeration, dance and song.

While much of the literature in geography assesses organised opposition (Morris 1999; Routledge 1997; Watts 1997), there has also been significant conversation around Scott's 'weapons of the weak' or 'everyday' forms of resistance (Pile 1997). Within contexts of pervasive structural violence, we see forms of agency in small spaces as people negotiate, appropriate and create counter-narratives within contexts of structural violence. Anger, despair and emotive resistance creates a context in which there is a possibility for and the sense of a need for resistance action at the same time that formal networks do not exist. Quiet resistance struggles unfold in the everyday activities of mockery, storytelling, joking, and livelihood adaptations and these performative practices help make sense of hardship in place and tell the 'other side' of the story of systemic violence. There are two important critiques of this body of scholarship: (i) that it tends to romanticise the poor and over-celebrate small actions that are not sufficiently empowering in the face of enormous obstacles and (ii) by seeing resistance in the smallest of actions (e.g., talking back, telling a story or making graffiti), resistance becomes emptied of meaning; resistance is flattened through ubiquity or its presence everywhere.

Work in geography has critiqued a tendency to romanticise resistance, particularly 'everyday' forms of resistance (Katz 2004; Sparke 2008). Sparke (2008: 424) explains,

it is a romance that is initiated by assumptions about autonomous action and animated by diverse forms of idealism; a romance that ultimately imagines agency in the existential and ageographical terms of some seminal and heroically universalized human spirit, and thus a romance that also tends to pre-empt empirical research.

This tendency is further exacerbated by the representational legacy of the so-called 'noble savage' discourse, or the romanticisation of 'local'/'pure' Indigenous

ontologies and epistemologies, as they are positioned against oppressive and dominating structural forces.⁸ Instead, resistance and struggle, however remarkable, do not ‘necessarily negate the power of the state or class interests’ (Ballard 2014: 7). Scholars must engage *realistically* and honestly with the political emancipation possible through action, as well as the level of decimation effected by the uneven accumulation of global neoliberal capitalism. Further complicating the matter, as Katz (2004: 245) demonstrates, resistance struggles in one community might problematically ‘advance and sustain capitalist accumulation elsewhere’.

The second critique of the study of resistance in the realm of everyday action is that ‘if resistance can be found in the tiniest act... then how is resistance to be recognised as a distinctive practice?’ (Pile 1997: 14). This dilemma has given rise to discussions of intent or consciousness as deciding factors in resistance acts. Mitch Rose (*italics added*, 2002: 387) explains,

without the articulation of intent, the researcher, rather than the agent, identifies both the source of oppression and the practices contradicting it. Thus, any *perceived* discrepancy between a predefined notion of hegemony and individual practice can constitute a form of resistance.

This intent-focused approach authorises the researcher to delineate and set the terms of the definition of resistance acts. Instead, Rose proposes, ‘practices of resistance have no definitive features in and of themselves but are defined through their oppositional relationship to power’ (Rose 2002: 387). Even this, however, is reductive and, paradoxically, *disempowering* as it reduces resistance to survival tactics against a system of domination. Rose (2001: 389) writes, ‘in trusting power, resistance theory reinforces a representation of the centre, the normative, and the

⁸ This ‘noble savage’ is a racialised and racist construct, situating the non-western both person closer to nature and less constrained by ‘modern’ avarice, particularly selfishness and greed. This situating positions the native lower on the (fabricated) evolutionary hierarchy of the scientific racism that emerged in Western Europe in the 1700s.

ideological. It is complicit in the construction of the dominant order whose destabilization it takes to be its cause'. While not an entirely unproblematic solution, I move away from the dominance/resistance paradigm for this reason, looking instead at life within a nexus of structural violence, demonstrating that possibilities to escape or destroy the system are imaginable.

Recent geographical discussions concerning resistance have been situated within the dominance/resistance paradigm, alternately called geographies of power and geographies of resistance, using a Foucauldian framework that focuses primarily on how to conceptualise resistance *and* domination in their interconnectedness (e.g., the edited collection from Sharp and Routledge et al., *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Dominance/Resistance*). This has engendered debate on whether or not resistance should be described as intentional, reactionary or agent-inspired. An understanding of an overarching structure of dominance and hegemony *against* which resistance occurs is problematic, as critiques have illustrated, in its tendency to cast resistance not as a reflection of human capacity for self-empowerment but as *reaction* to the hegemony and domination. While uneven access to power, mechanisms of repression, violence and control do inform resistance practices these influences are never totalising. Instead, I work away from dominance as the force against which resistance emerges (as in the dominance/resistance paradigm informed by the work of Michel Foucault). This is a double-movement that is also evoked by a decolonial ethos, which seeks to pursue 'acts of imagination'⁹ outside the intellectual contributions of the dominant Euro-American canon, which do not appropriately describe contemporary power relations in Cameroon (Connell 2008).

I shift from a conceptualisation of domination and focus my analysis instead on

⁹ 'Acts of the imagination' are central to the Pan-African political philosophy of the influential Burkinabé revolutionary, Thomas Sankara.

the particular and situated processes of structural violence, never absolute and always destructible, as opposed to a Foucauldian conception of ‘domination’, which, while fluctuating, is a permanent social feature, along with resistance, which, Foucault argues, shapes domination. Foucault (1997: 167) writes,

We are not trapped. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is not point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it. So what I’ve said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free—well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing...[R]esistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic.

Conceptualising resistance as a mode of practices that illustrates the capacity and will of people to live fully, one which currently unfolds amidst systemic violence (as in the case of Cameroon), human action emerges as uneven, creative, not always positive but always with potential to move out of or destroy structural configurations of power and violence. Moreover, as Béatrice Hibou (2011) powerfully emphasises in the case of the ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia, the non-socio-economic roots of revolution, including complex intersections of emotional toil, shame and suffering, are tremendously important in shaping resistance movements. Hibou (2011: 225) persuasively argues that, ‘neither the socio-economic nor the democratic explanation (nor a combination of the two) suffices to explain’. To engender a more thorough understanding of Tunisian anger and frustration with the regime, ‘one needs to make use of a notion that is difficult to define and is often neglected, yet is the heart of numerous currents of revolt: dignity’ (Hibou 2011: 225). As such, Hibou urges a greater attention to the role of dignity in inspiring social justice movements.

Fundamental to this analysis are the complexities and nuances of local geopolitics, gender practices and ethnic and class relations in shaping people’s lived experiences (what is valued, felt and sensed) along the pipeline so as to attend to the

ways in which human emotion, including attachments and responsibilities to a community (in the case of Nanga, as I explore in *Article IV: The Right to the Rural?*), informs the experience of violence as well as resistances among it. Might we, I wonder, tease out the intricate connections and disconnections between resistance and systemic violence, not as a cause-and-effect or directly structural phenomenon but as simultaneously influencing without being exclusively co-constitutive?

A Foucauldian power/resistance diagram

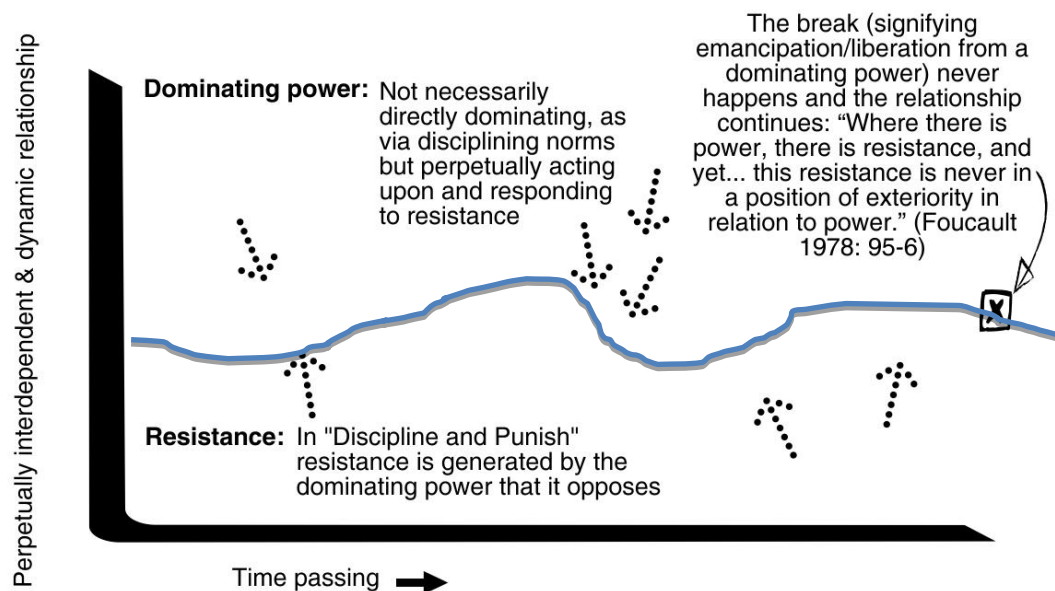


Figure 6. A Foucauldian domination/resistance paradigm.

Part of this project is recognising and paying respect to the lived experiences of structural violence, which are valuable on their own terms. This project attends to some of the voices that have been left out of the knowledge on the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, through a holistic decolonial framework that seeks to honour and entwine different kinds and types of knowledge without privileging one perspective. Taking the work of bell hooks (1990) as an example, intellectual work of honouring and remembering is itself an act of resistance. She writes,

The act of remembrance is a conscious gesture honouring their struggle, their effort to keep something for their own. I want us to respect and understand that this effort has been and continues to be a radically subversive political gesture. For those who dominate and oppress us benefit most when we have nothing to give our own, when they have taken from us our dignity, our humanness that we have nothing left, no 'homeplace' where we can recover ourselves. (hooks 1990: 42-43)

Neither structural violence nor resistance are straightforwardly teleological processes and neither are permanent nor entirely synthesisable. Resistance is often spontaneous, felt by the unleashing of powerful unifying emotions: grief, frustration, anger, shame and hope. In the aftermath of the 'Arab Spring' it is clearer than ever that social mobilisations are spontaneous and unplanned and that they originate in the bubbling over of everyday toils, often in rural areas, as with the case of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia that have deep historical legacies. These struggles begin in everyday forms of resistance that continue for years, often unnoticed. In this vein, the negotiating strategies, resistance practices and struggles of people living along the pipeline in Cameroon offer important insights into the formulations of social resistance to the slowly evolving violence of neoliberal globalising projects and militarised regimes. Understanding life amid systemic violence is meaningful for those concerned with understanding the human consequences of capitalist rearrangements of local landscapes and lifescapes, including the identification of and working towards other ways of being and knowing for the future outside modernity's nexus of structural violence.

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Article I
Searching for a Decolonising Ethos
Beyond the 'Language of the Mouth'

Abstract

A guiding principle, or ethos, for decolonising knowledge creation is an attentive contextualisation to the *longue durée* of the geopolitics of knowledge where we are on the ground. Drawing from socio-political narratives of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, I explore some of the potentials for a critical knowledge making that endeavours to be relational, co-creational and grounded. A decolonial ethos moves towards a knowledge co-creation beyond static reflections of author positionality. This is possible, I think, through a combination of (i) attention to emplacement or the place of conscious political dwelling (à la Mignolo 2011), (ii) an emphasis on building and maintaining sustained relationships with people where we work and (iii) a grounded ethical and political orientation that is attentive foremost to the voices and experiences of the people in the places where we work. Attending to this project, I address some of the particular histories and legacies of colonial knowledge frameworks and epistemic dispossession of *la langue de la bouche* (the language of the mouth) in Cameroon, as knowledge production that is alternately dormant or destructive; I focus particularly on the role of the World Bank in shaping the educational and knowledge landscape of the country, in the context of the Bank's involvement with the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. A holistic decolonial ethos moves towards the creation of counter-episteme(s) to *la langue de la bouche*.

Keywords: decolonising ethos; decolonial thought; epistemic dispossession; geopolitics of knowledge; World Bank

La langue de la bouche: the language of the mouth

'Everyday we dream that the pipe will come back... that they haven't forgotten about us... and that they'll keep their promises', Monsieur Tené¹ told me.

We were speaking in the courtyard of his home, outside the community of Nanga (as the town of Nanga-Eboko is generally called by the people living there), in Cameroon's Région du Centre. Monsieur Tené was wearing a faded black T-shirt and shorts. His feet were bare. Derogy was sitting near some dusty roadside bushes, quietly filming the scene. Next to Monsieur Tené on the wooden bench of the open-air courtyard stall sat Atango, a benskiner (motorcycle taxi man) who had driven us that day. Atango was nodding off periodically in the afternoon heat. I slapped at the

¹ People's names are both unchanged or anonymised in respect to each person's particular wishes. I make no indication when names have been anonymised or not.

itchy moutmout (biting flies that are invisible to the human eye) bites on my exposed hands. Monsieur Tené handed me his raffia broom to swat the flies away.

As Monsieur Tené spoke, a tall woman walked along the roadside. He called her over to join us. ‘She is my neighbour and can tell you about the pipe’, he said by way of explanation. She was on her way to sell meat sauce to the migrant labourers employed by the road construction company. An iron pot was balanced neatly atop her vivid red hat. The woman walked up to where we were seated and placed the pot on the wooden bench next to Monsieur Tené. She eyed me with a mixture of curiosity and suspicion. She did not sit down. Monsieur Tené told her that I was there ‘to ask questions about the pipe’.

She quickly replied, ‘Aikiéééééé, encore vous ?’²

Monsieur Tené smiled at me.

By saying, ‘you again’, she was referring to previous interactions with researchers working along the oil pipeline: academics, journalists, non-profit employees, oil consortium representatives or World Bank researchers, who have visited Nanga to conduct studies, surveys and interviews on-and-off for the last decade.

With the construction of the pipeline between 2000 and 2003, forests, farmlands and ancestral lands were appropriated along a 30 to 50 metre wide corridor. A material land space as large as the Benelux (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) was appropriated for the 30-year lifespan of the project. In Cameroon, the pipeline passes beneath 238 villages and is within two kilometres of 794 additional villages (Lo 2010: 155). The scale of the project, as well as the World Bank’s role in engineering the pipeline project to combine oil exploitation with

² Translations (and any errors thereof) are my own.

programmes for social welfare on the Chadian side of the pipeline, has generated much international interest in the pipeline. In September 2008, the World Bank released a statement that ends the Bank's involvement with the project, naming Chad's 'failed' compliance with ordinances within the Oil Revenue Management Act as the impetus for the withdrawal (WB No. 2009/073/AFR). The Bank's decision to withdraw from the project signalled the failure of the project to deliver on promises of 'development' and 'poverty eradication'. The World Bank promoted the development potentialities of the capital-intensive project and yet the project exacerbated gender inequalities and brought about large-scale ecological pollution, contamination and deforestation (Endley and Sikod 2007; Jackson 2009; Schwartz and Nodem 2009; Endley 2010; Leibold 2011; Murrey 2015). As Nanga was particularly impacted by rising HIV/AIDS rates, the area has been visited by a number of journalists and employees of non-governmental organisation (NGOs), who monitor and report upon the pipeline.

While clapping her hands together for emphasis on a point and then rolling them outward with a graceful flick of her fingers, Monsieur Tené's neighbour, Nadine, explained that she had been asked to travel to Buea, in western Cameroon, to visit with university students and professors about the pipeline's role in the destruction of local livelihoods and water sources. Nothing ever came of the visits from researchers to Nanga village, she said with a long, emphatic smack of her tongue to the top of her palate. She explained that the village water sources, which had been contaminated and destroyed during the pipeline's construction ten years ago, have not been repaired, despite on-going complaints from people in the village.

Nadine succinctly ended our conversation, 'tout ça c'est la langue de la bouche. Moi, je m'en vais vendre ma viande' (all of that is the language/tongue of the

mouth. I am going to sell my meat). Nadine's term, *la langue de la bouche*, distinguishes between an inactive language (of the mouth) and an active language (of movement and of the body). I took her brief monologue as a challenge against the language of inaction. Her articulation echoes in some ways the phrase '*la langue de bois*' (the wooden tongue), which refers to the empty speech of propagandists, politicians and professionals from whose mouths words without meaning or effect.

Fanon makes a similar critique, noting,

All the Mediterranean values—the triumph of the human individual, of clarity and of beauty—become lifeless, colourless knick-knacks. All those speeches seem like collections of *dead words*; those values which seemed to uplift the soul are revealed as worthless, simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged (*italics added* Fanon 1961: 36).

Fanon's criticism of 'dead words' arises out of the dissonance between the meaning of language (often ideal, with high moral standards) and contrary actions by those who use high-moral language. Both Fanon and Nadine remark upon the use of language and the work of the mouth to make noise to no effect. This article is part of my on-going engagement with her powerful challenge: what are the possible *ethes* for writing and knowledge creation that moves beyond the language of the mouth?

Taking as the place of departure my experiences as a researcher looking at people's stories and narratives of the oil pipeline in Cameroon, I address the powers of knowing/geopolitics of knowledge creation and the purposes of scholarship in Cameroon to elucidate the liberatory potentials and quandaries of decolonising *ethes*. This requires first and foremost an engagement with the various forms of *la langue de la bouche* in Cameroon: epistemological dispossession through missionary and colonial education and the neoliberalisation of education since the 1980s. As I elucidate within, there are a number of languages of the mouth. *La langue de la bouche* along the pipeline can be conceived of as the techno-scientific vocabulary

embedded within and supporting the ideological paradigm of economic growth based on the primordality of the market: a language which facilitates material violence and has enormously destructive consequences for the peoples, ecologies and epistemologies subsumed within their schematic worlds.

An oil consortium made up of ExxonMobil, Chevron-Texaco and Petronas, with the leadership of the World Bank, designed the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline to merge petroleum



Figure 7. Nadine expresses her frustrations with the language of the mouth. Nanga, Cameroon.

profit with ‘development’, including through educational projects, the construction of primary schoolrooms and knowledge acquisition efforts (including the largest

archaeological excavation in Central Africa).³ I take as my starting point here the historical and political contexts of colonial epistemological dispossession and fifty years of World Bank lending priorities and debt management practices, the policies of which have informed and continue to inform the infrastructure and the geopolitics of knowledge in Cameroon. Twenty-five years of youth and student organising in the country illustrate the need for alternatives to hollow calls for universal education. In a project centred on people's narratives, stories and understandings of the landscape of the oil pipeline, I combine multidisciplinary and multidimensional methodologies—drawing from anti-colonial, decolonial and Indigenous decolonising methodologies—for a methodology in which a sensitivity to my 'place of consciousness' (Mignolo 2011) is grounded in an attentiveness to the voices of people in Nanga and Kribi.

I structure the article around Cameroonian maxims, jokes and songs; doing so demonstrates, in some small measure, the powerful wisdom and wit of Cameroonian oral popular art, including the vernacular Camfranglais or Camfrang, which works to 'cass[e] le français pour trouver et restituer le rythme africain': break up the French language to find and recreate an African rhythm (Moto 2013: 3). This project necessities more than nascent insights, observations or situated knowledge from my vantage point. Centring these narratives, songs and quips is a means of privileging the theorising, creation and insights that are outside my authorial perspective. This approach to theoretical writing is also part of the project of displacing or de-centring the scholar/researcher in intellectual creation and working towards more sustained mechanisms of co-creation for the decolonisation of knowledge. The diversity in storytelling form is reflected in Indigenous decolonising methodologies, characterised by vivid descriptions, distinctive tones, multiple voices, and varying typographies

³ Chevron sold its stocks in the project in 2014.

(e.g. poetry, prose, song, image, theatre, metaphor). I include poems throughout to name some of the silences, miscommunications, glimpses, sounds, smells and uncertainties bound up in being in-place in Cameroon.

The relevance of the ‘decolonial turn’ for understandings of violence

Mon frère, tu bois souvent quoi? This statement—my brother, what do you commonly drink?—is a humorous reference to an awkwardness or clumsiness. The implication is that the beverage that the person drinks is messing with her/his head. A related phrase, *il a bu l’eau ?* (he drank water?), is used when someone says or does something seemingly nonsensical.⁴ I draw inspiration from this Cameroonianism for a frank appraisal of the hubris in proposing that we (everyone) *can* and *should* look at violence through a detached and dispassionate (and therefore, the argument goes, ‘unbiased’) conceptual framework. For example, Slavoj Žižek’s (2009) argument that those seeking to understand violence should do so ‘dispassionate[ly]’ perpetuates the long-standing fallacy of an omnipresent rational being capable of detaching from the ‘passions’: an ordering principle that has its origins in Greek philosophy and theorising through logos. Logos includes a particularised rhetoric and way of presenting arguments, one that Luce Irigaray (2013) critiques as solipsistic and exclusively masculine. In this ‘cold critical analysis’ (Žižek 2009), feelings/emotions are unreasonable or irrational and therefore detachment is preferable. The premise, of course, is that detachment is possible.

The decolonial thinker Walter D. Mignolo (2000) argues instead that scholars must make explicit the conscious place in which knowledge creations occur—what I

⁴ The phrase, perhaps a reference to *l’eau de feu* (firewater :: *l’odontol* :: indigenously brewed palm gin), also provides an off-handed commentary on the larger systemic issue of water contamination and pollution in Cameroon.

refer to here as an ethical and political ethos—as a means to decolonise modernity’s fictitious ‘hybris del pinto cero’. The hubris of the zero-point is a term coined by Santiago Castro-Gomez (2007) to critique the history of establishing knowing from an artificial, disembodied cerebral in a nowhere space. This hubris has been essential in the presupposition of an ‘unbiased’, non-corporeal, scholar capable of universal, fact-based abstractions for scientific ‘truth’. Positioning oneself as if from a zero-point removes scholarship from the historical, political, social and economic contexts in which it emerges. More than this, the hubris of the zero-point is a mechanism for the de-legitimisation of other ways of knowing; it functions by relegating embodied knowledges and non-desensitised ways of knowing to the margins. Lewis R. Gordon (1995: 12) urges, ‘there is no extra-practical realm frozen above time here’, echoing the limitations of knowledge projects that remain at the level of *la langue de la bouche*, abstracted from people’s concerns and life experiences.

The proposition that violence is best understood from a de-socialised and disconnected stance encourages particular and ‘deliberately selective’ gendered and racialised scientific descriptions of ‘reality’ (‘;’;/;/Bourdieu 1998: 94): neoliberal, capitalistic, mercantilistic—which are at the foundations of shaping social-ecological exchanges for profit. This ‘cold critical analysis’ (Žižek 2009) in the social sciences is not entirely dissimilar from cost-benefit analysis, which is used by corporate entities to calculate profit in the face of livelihood and ecological destruction (the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, for example, was classified as a *Category A Project* by the World Bank, meaning the project would have significant or unprecedented adverse impacts on people and the environment). Likewise, the ‘Results Framework’ logic of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been critiqued for using pre-planned targets to measure the success of development projects for donor requirements, which

often have little bearing on people's lives and experiences (Wallace, Porter and Ralph-Bowman 2013). Policy-directed research on the African continent has been criticised for the people-as-problems-orientation embedded within, sometimes casting entire populations as problems to be addressed by experts (Mamdani 1993 and 2011; Hardy 2014). These forms of the language of the mouth artificially separate the mind from embodied experience, positioning such forms of knowing as other than or exterior to the dominant technocratic analyses arising from the neoliberal capitalist episteme. I do not mean to conflate divergent discursive projects of evaluation but to highlight one similarity among them: the tendency to de-privilege emotive and non-linear response, memory and narrative, an epistemological framework gravely approximate to the symbolic violence(s) of 'thingification' and 'objectification' of the colonial project (Césaire 1955: 177; Anzaldúa 1999: 59).

The 'decolonial turn' refers to (i) the impetus for a cooperative of thinkers against the methodological destruction effected through colonial knowledge and (ii) a collective body of theoretical pluriversals whose goal is decolonising the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano 2000), which is both 'an epochal condition, and [an] epistemological design, [which] lies at the centre of the present world order' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 11). The Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano's triad of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality sets the tone for decolonial thinking by exposing the deeply racist modern colonial system. In his 1989 article, 'Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad', Quijano positions the creation of race firmly within the conquering and plundering of Latin America in 1492, which paved the way for the modernisation of Western Europe. The decolonial project begins with a recognition that colonial and genocidal violence were essential to the modernisation of the West and that this violence is the 'darker side of western modernity' (Mignolo 2011). What

is more, coloniality did not stop following decolonisation but continues in a ‘transformed [...] outer form’: a living legacy, visible in the social structures of the postcolony (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992: 550). This is what Quijano calls the ‘coloniality of power’ and for this reason, healing colonial wounds is imperative to the decolonial project. This involves the ‘search for ways to think, know and act’, which enables a collective move toward a more socially just world (Walsh 2009: 233).

Anti-colonial, decolonial and Indigenous scholars have been highly critical of the exploitative processes of information mining in the northern social sciences, which inadvertently replicate a colonial ‘thingification’ of people and places through disembodied, abstract and extractive knowing (Césaire 1955: 177; Anzaldúa 1999: 59). The process of ‘knowledge production’ (distinct from knowledge *creation*) can be described in terms similar to capitalist production: scholar-researchers descend into places to extract raw data (like raw minerals), which is then analysed and theorised (much like the process of refining raw materials), usually in the institutions of the ‘global North’, after which it is discussed, reviewed and published in northern academic institutions (consumed, if you will, as a value-added commodity).

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a reflexive turn in research methodologies, as the researcher’s position vis-à-vis the people involved in the research became a central focus of criticism. This moment produced a body of literature identifying and critiquing notable weaknesses and biases in the western scientific production of knowledge. Much has since been written on the politics, biases and inadequacies of scientific observations (Haraway 1991 and 1992; Behar 1996; Rose 1997; Mountz 2010). Second and third wave feminist scholarship has been particularly powerful in taking up questions of authorship, research authority and the politics of intellectual

praxis in ways that destabilise hegemonic practices (hooks 1984; Minh-ha 1989; Collins 1990).

However, the reflexive turn failed to bring about a wholesale transformation of how knowledge is gathered, assessed, created, reproduced in academia. Instead, the reflexive moment gave rise to what Richa Nagar and Susan Geiger (2007) characterise as a ‘paralysing’ reflexivity that is inactive, or, as Audrey Kobayashi (2003) writes, the author is reasserted as of principal importance in a potentially selfish reflection. This re-centring of the author inadvertently reinforces the power hierarchy between the scholar/subject. Further, I note, there seems to be a trend to compartmentalise the researcher’s self-reflection or reflexivity within the methodological section of the research, after which there is a sort-of return to business-as-usual as Eurocentric ontologies, epistemologies and theories are employed. This is, at least partially, a reflection of deeply rooted disciplinary limitations that structure and denote the significance of knowledge as it pertains to particular limited frameworks (see Gordon’s 2011: 98 critique of ‘disciplinary decadence’, in which ‘becoming “right” is simply a matter of applying the method correctly’) and the neoliberalisation of higher education, including the ‘publish or perish’ culture and academic gatekeeping that demands scholars speak to particular intellectual trends within particular paradigms, often through authorship from the artificial and decontextualised zero-point. Moreover, as Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2011: 6) writes, the ‘genealogy of European intellectuals’ has remained, even in intellectual projects that critique Eurocentric thought; the work of decolonial theorists has powerfully exposed strands of Marxism, feminism and postcolonialism as ‘Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism’, drawing predominantly as they do from

Marx, Foucault, Deleuze, Lacan and other European thinkers (Walsh 2007; Grosfoguel 2008; Moldonado-Torres 2011).

Instead of assuming that thinking comes *before* being—as was posited so famously by René Descartes, the ‘father’ of modern western philosophy, who declared ‘je pense donc je suis’ (I think therefore I am)—a decolonial ethos establishes that, as Mignolo (2009: 2) explains, ‘it is a racially marked body in a geo-historically marked space that feels the urge to get the call to speak, to articulate, in whatever semiotic system’. This place where one thinks/where one theorises is not a physical or geographical space per se; it is a place and a body within a place that have ‘been configured by the colonial matrix of power’ (Mignolo 2011: xvi). Mignolo writes (*italics original*, 2011: xiii), ‘The point... is not where you *reside* but where you *dwell*. Césaire and Fanon... dwelled in the history of the Middle Passage, of the plantations, of slavery and of the runaway slaves’. A similar notion is offered by Chandra Mohanty (1987), who distinguishes between a ‘location as one inherits it and [an] active, strategic positioning’ (qtd. in Kaplan 1990: 26). In this paradigm, *where we consciously locate ourselves* is a deliberate and mindful place-making process. In short, our place of dwelling is our political and ethical ethos. Approaching and understanding knowledge creation in such a way entails a diligent self-reflexivity that acknowledges our participation in the operations of the colonial matrix of power as a means to reform, resist and collaborate for the re-centring of unequal knowledge creation. This ethos, however, must move beyond a static and author-centric reflection on positionality and must be politically and historically contextualised in place.

Outline of arguments

As a means to further articulate this decolonial ethos, I address some of the geopolitics of knowledge in Cameroon by looking at some of the particular histories of ‘official knowing’ and the employment of knowledge for colonisation, resource theft and post-colonial dispossession to provide a foundational understanding of the critique of *la langue de la bouche*. This contextualisation informs my place of consciousness or my conscious political positioning against the language of the mouth. I look at the possibilities for co-creation to move beyond reflections of author positionality; this is possible through a combination of an attention to emplacement (as the place of conscious political dwelling), relationality (relationships with the people where we work) along with a grounded methodological orientation that is attentive foremost to the voices and experiences of the people in the places where we work. Importantly, this demands confronting hegemonic knowledge projects—the language of the mouth—centrally and directly, so that I might endeavour to think and collaborate otherwise.

Indigenous and decolonial approaches are unified by an impetus towards the decolonisation of ‘knowledge, power and being, including institutions such as the university’ (Maldonado-Torres 2011: 1) and Indigenous thinkers have more explicitly engaged with concretely delineating processes for the decolonisation of knowledge creation in communities, on-the-ground and outside of the university. Decolonial thinkers articulate methodologies otherwise; some even argue for the suspension of ‘methodologies’ as such (Gordon 2011). In this way, the decolonial knowledge project does not have a set methodology, as in a discrete, encapsulated process determined prior to the research relationship even beginning; instead, it has an ethical and political ethos which is with and beside people, established only on-the-ground,

in meeting with people. It is not an abstract set of actions determined prior to meeting with people but must be constantly and each time uniquely negotiated through the establishing and maturing of relationships within the knowledge project. Part of acknowledging this is confronting deeply rooted epistemological limits of established social sciences, which are founded upon the oftentimes rigid rules and regulations of the methodology. Methodologies preserve boundary-making within the academy, wherein the delineations between academic and non-academic knowing are mapped, regulated and policed. Particular engagements (or should they be called *disengagements*?) with people and places are endorsed as effective routes to producing knowledge, principally those impersonal or de-personalised engagements where identities are removed and subjectivities hidden within the hubris of the zero-point.

The decolonising ethe I discuss here are not a neatly synthesisable or formulaic set of rules intended to determine or authorise certain knowledges. Instead, they arise from a contextualisation of knowledge and knowing in Nanga and Kribi, Cameroon, specifically an intellectual project juxtaposed with the World Bank's role in perpetuating epistemic dispossessions. As such, in the first section of this article, I situate the project within a context of pervasive epistemic dispossession.

In the second section, I draw from the decolonial turn and the work of Indigenous thinkers, to elucidate a decolonial ethos which endeavours to give rise to counter-epistemes to *la langue de la bouche*. This ethos is grounded in storytelling and narrative as methods for co-creation centred on relationships and sustained efforts to de-centre and de-privilege the scholar/author self. I conclude with final reflections on the decolonial task of 'shifting the geography of reason' entirely on its head (Gordon 2011), a shift that entails moving *beyond* the language of the mouth.

Section I: La langue de la bouche along the pipeline

A.) Historical background

La langue de la bouche—not only inactive but also repressive knowledge—in Cameroon has been enacted at multiple scales: the development of colonial knowledge for social control, intimately tied with missionary activity and the development of the sciences, including agronomy, anthropology, geography, medical and pharmaceutical science (Leslie 2013). In the 1700s British Baptist missionaries settled permanently in Limbe (at the time Victoria) on the coast of Cameroon. In the early 1870s, American Presbyterian missionaries established a settlement at Grand Batanga, where today the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline extends beneath the Atlantic Ocean to the offloading vessel.



Figure 8. Colonial-era Cathédrale Saint-Joseph, Kribi, Cameroon.

These early missionaries and charter company employees prepared the landscape for colonialism: they set up permanent trading posts with guns and cannons that would facilitate the violent appropriation of African resources. They also established the missionary schools that educated people in European languages and socialised pupils as human capital for brutal and often forced colonial labour (Kanu 2006). This implementation of Eurocentric, Christian-oriented, fixed-classroom instruction was unlike previous oral-based educational styles, which focused on holistic wellness—physical, moral, emotional, spiritual—of the community and self (Diang 2013).⁵ The implementation of Christian values—‘forgiveness, submissiveness and patience [the belief] that life on earth was temporary and should be a preparation for eternal life’ (Diang 2013: 10)—alongside a condemnation of Indigenous world views, violently and permanently transformed conceptualisations of community and self, effecting epistemic dispossessions on a grand scale.

in Yaoundé my friend tells a joke about white man’s religion
ils ont dit qu’il faut fermer les yeux pour mieux croire...
mais quand tu les ouvre, le blanc a tout pris !
—they said to close your eyes to really believe...
but when you open them, the white man stole everything!—
we laugh as hands clap together
then silence
someone sips from a Guinness⁶

After the territory of Kamerun was declared a German ‘protectorate’ (Schutzgebiet) in July 1884, a vast and diverse population speaking more than 250 languages was subsumed under one artificial geographical entity (Quinn 1980). Missionary education became an important tool in cultivating colonial political

⁵ Here the focus is on the role of Christian missionaries as they were more common in the central, southern and western regions of Cameroon and not Islamic schooling, which was more common in the northern regions. For an analysis of Islamic schooling in Cameroon see Diang (2013).

⁶ Poem by author.

values, ways of life, languages and world-views. Colonial education was instrumental in imposing what Francis Nyamnjoh (2004: 168) refers to as the ‘Western epistemological export’, or the dominant epistemology at the core of ‘the mission [to] deval[ue] or annihilat[e] African creativity, agency and value systems’. This is what de Sousa Santos, Nunes and Meneses (2008: xxxiii) call the ‘burden of the colonial epistemic monoculture’. Forced labour was partially managed through a system of colonially imposed local chiefs, including the creation of chieftaincy posts where they had not previously existed, as was the case among the non-hierarchical Beti of Nanga and central Cameroon (Quinn 1980). Missionary education and forced labour regimes continued after the forced transfer of colonial power to the British and French following Germany’s defeat in World War I.

B.) Education along the pipeline

Nearly one hundred years later, the engineers of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline drew upon the framework of missionary ideology in positing the pipeline project as another venture in ‘African development’: the multinational-corporation-as-development-instrument echoes the ways in which early European charter companies and missionaries were rhetorically presented as ‘civilising’ forces, i.e. ‘la mission civilisatrice’ (Césaire 1955). There are uncanny similarities between these charter companies, cast as quasi-humanitarian bodies in an Enlightenment epistemology of human evolution that naturalised domination of one people over another (Mudimbe 1985), and the ethos of social corporate responsibility in today’s multinationals.⁷

⁷ See Ottaway 2001 for a compelling examination of such ‘reluctant missionaries’ in the oil industry.

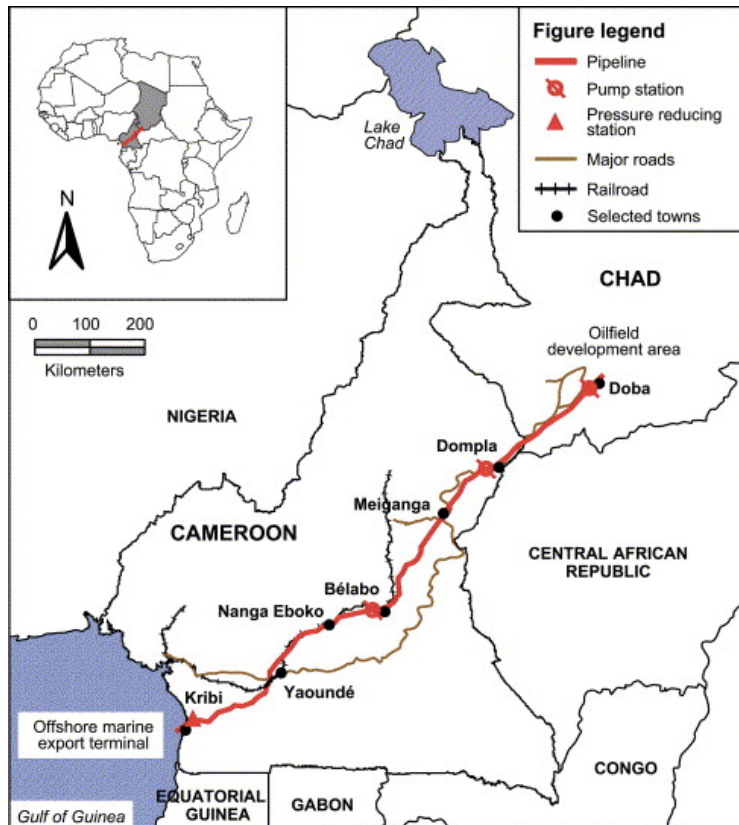


Figure 9. (above)
Map of pipeline adapted from World Bank; note the aesthetic affect of positioning the pipeline within vacuous spaces.
Source: World Bank.

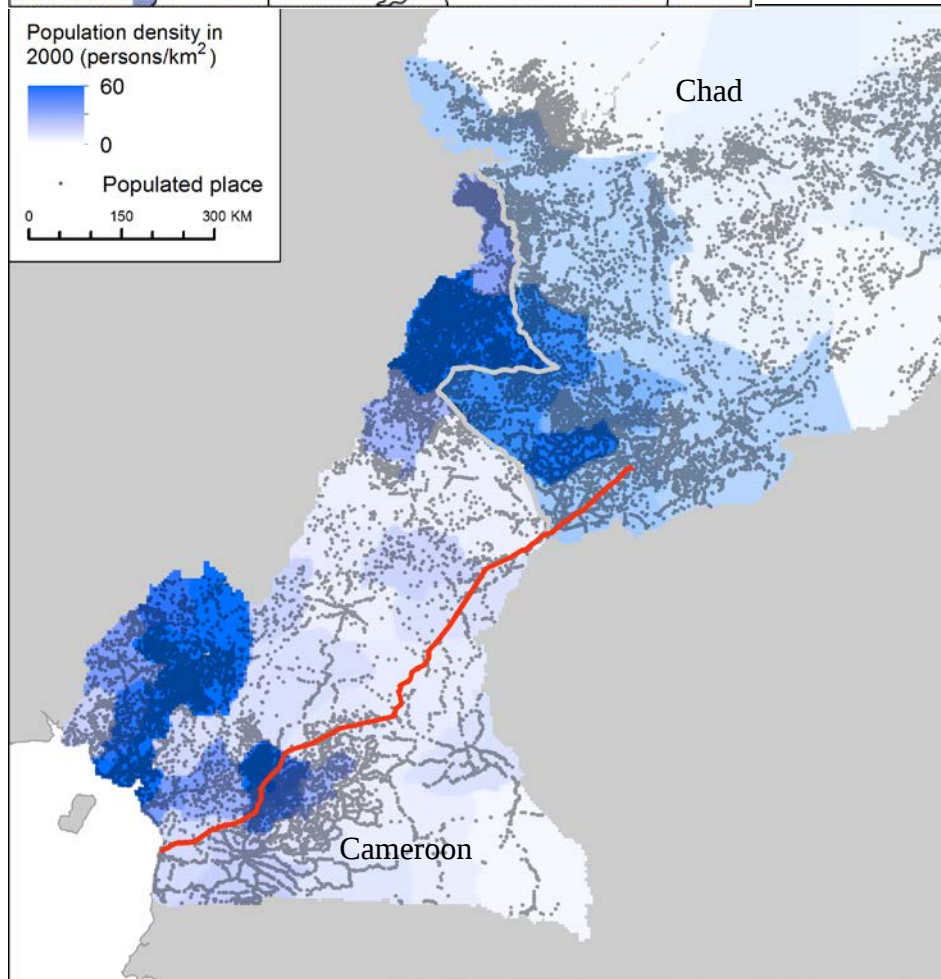


Figure 10. (below)
Map of pipeline superimposed on population map of Cameroon, which indicates the scope of the fiction of the pipeline's 'small footprint' (e.g., WB 2013 'Global Footprint').

La langue de la bouche was fundamental to the Bank's framing of the pipeline project; in this case, the 'civilising' agenda was a 'civil-society agenda'. A central component of the consortium's developmental approach to oil exploitation in the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline were its educational initiatives and apparent efforts to support educational infrastructure, almost exclusively through the construction of schoolrooms.⁸ In Chad, the World Bank's Petroleum Revenue Management Law (PRML) earmarked 80 per cent of oil revenue for public health and poverty alleviation measures, including education. In Cameroon, the consortium constructed schoolrooms as a mode of community compensation (compensation was enacted at the levels of the individual, communal and regional) and held educational campaigns on oil and pipeline safety.

In Etog-Nang village near Nanga, two brothers explained that the local schoolroom built by the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company (COTCO) as a part of community reimbursement for the passage of the pipeline was never filled with benches or a chalkboard. The brothers, Elie and Joseph, explained that one of the exterior walls of the schoolroom partially collapsed during a rainstorm while the children were inside attending class. 'Fortunately', Joseph said, 'the wall fell *out* instead of *in*'. COTCO declined to pay for building repairs and the parents collected money over a period of several months to replace the wall. During this time, children continued to attend school, as Joseph said sarcastically, 'en plein air'. In another case, in Mpango village near Kribi, construction for a school building was initiated by the parents, who were already working together to collect funds. 'Then COTCO', Sewa,

⁸ Leaked World Bank documents reveal that certain spending mechanisms, environmental safeguards and safety standards within WB loan agreements are being altered, reduced and/or 'offset' ('offsetting' refers to the practice of accepting ecological destruction in one area with concessions to conserve in another area) in a push for increased lending and 'smart risk-taking' or 'smart failure' (WB Risk and Accountability Change Team 2013: 12).

the son of the chief of Mpango village outside Kribi, explained, ‘came in and completed the funds’. Sewa and I had many such conversations during my time in Kribi. He earned his Bachelor’s degree at the Université de Douala or U-DLA and returned to Kribi after graduation. With a young son to care for, he was the only young man in a group of 16 (during a later discussion) from Mpango who was employed. In 2013, he was working as a negotiator/real estate agent.

The schoolrooms built by COTCO as community compensation were not staffed with teachers nor filled with desks, benches, chairs, chalkboards or books. With ‘ecole’ painted on the doors and the signs outside, these are little more than rectangular rooms: four walls and a roof. Sultan Oshimin, an artist who popularised le reggae Kamer, powerfully critiques the tendency of a minimalist educational infrastructure in Cameroon, from primary school through to the university, in his song, *Quelle École* (What School). Oshimin sings,

Ils disent l’école primaire au Kamer c’est ‘gratuit’
 Les frais de l’APE sont toujours exigés
 Des parents n’ont pas d’argent pour acheter des livres
 ...Les jeunes ont compris, ils sont tous au centre ville
 Ils vendent des bonbons, ils vendent des arachides
 ...Babylone rigole, rigole, rigole
 ...Amphi 500 pour trois mille étudiants
 ‘Université’—il y’a pas des toilettes
 ...Viens faire un tour du coté de SOA
 Ya pas d’eau potable, pas de campus étudiants
 Le premier ministère a construit ça...
 Mais on dit ‘école’, ‘école’
 Mais on dit, on dit ‘université’

In Kamer, they say primary school is ‘free’
 [Yet] PTA [Parent Teacher Association] fees are still required
 Parents do not have money to buy books
 ...The youth understand: they’re all in the city centre
 They’re selling candy, they’re selling peanuts
 ...Babylon [the West] laughs, laughs, laughs
 ...Amphitheatre [#]500 seats 3,000 students
 ‘University’ [but] there are no toilets
 ...Come take a tour of [the University of Yaoundé] SOA
 There is no drinking water, there is no student campus

The prime minister ‘built’ that...
But we say ‘school’, ‘school’
But we say, we say ‘university’

The song provides a critique of the hollow vocabularies ‘school’ and ‘university’, demanding that we look beyond empty buildings at the infrastructure of education. More than the lack of infrastructure—books, instructors, benches, chalkboards, notebooks, writing utensils, drinking water, toilets—is the sense that there is a lack of relevant teaching or relevant knowledge. For example, in Mpango along the pipeline, Jean said, ‘nearly every village between Kribi and Douala has a primary school, so why do they keep building more school rooms? We need technical training! We need jobs... We do not need more training in le bon francais [speaking proper French]’. Jean echoes Oshimin’s important point that a classroom does not translate into education and that education does not translate into wisdom nor education into employment.

The final point is reiterated in Oshimin’s lyric describing young people who sell candy and peanuts on the street because they have ‘understood the system’: even college graduates are sometimes unable to find viable employment in an employment market that often rewards those with social networks or powerful connections (or ‘le réseau’). In one of our later conversations, Sewa explained his conflicting experiences as both a student at U-DLA and an unemployed man; he told me,

Before, when you graduated, you began immediately to work. The mentality of men has now changed. There has been the growth of *se débrouillage* [making do through entrepreneurial means] that has created a creative spirit in Cameroonians... This created my generation, what we often call the ‘sacrificed generation’... it was our generation that began all the trouble in [February] 2008 [when people protested the rise in the price of foodstuffs and oil alongside Paul Biya’s intentions to amend the constitution to allow himself to hold the presidential office for an unlimited number of terms]... but honestly we cannot be frustrated because we have never known work. We have always understood that you must fight to survive.



Figure 11. ‘We do not need more training in le bon francais [speaking proper French]’. Group conversation. Mpango, Cameroon.

Sewa’s reflections on the relationship between education and employment contend starkly with the notion that the higher a person’s education, the more likely they are to be employed. Instead of a conviction that education would lead to a permanent position, Sewa explained that, even while pursuing his degree, there was a heightened awareness that a college degree would not ensure him employment.

Even at school, they told us that there is very little chance that you will find a job at a company when you finish. [University professors] prepared us for entrepreneurship [as in, self-fashioning and self-creation for potentially a lifetime of *se débrouillage*]. This whole generation—from 20 to 40 years—we all survive with *les petites business* [small money-making ventures, oftentimes buying and reselling or *buyam-sellam*]...

[Teachers and parents] told us that we must be ready to create for ourselves. It is true that I must live, *je dois me débrouille, me débrouille, me débrouille...* until I find it. [The pay] does not cover our ends, [there is] no retirement, no health insurance... also in which case the state refuses to look at the problems profoundly. We are maybe frustrated over burned dreams... but not really... I

don't know... it is true that you graduate from school, you find yourself at the house, begging for the same beignets as your three-year-old brother... people with doctorates who are begging for beignets!

Sewa classified himself and his peers as part of a 'sacrificed generation': a generation which the state not only failed to support but, oftentimes, whose policies actively dispossessed. He explained that state actors then interpret the population of perpetually jobless youth as dangerous. In response to this sense of danger, the state makes gestures to development employment opportunities and educational infrastructure from time to time. He said,

Now the state gives a little money while people go to school because they realised too many unemployed educated people [can] create problems for the state...

Paradoxically, joblessness opens spaces for creative expression:

...but it also saw the rise of freedom of expression. When we have moments of hunger, it is true that we complain that, 'the country kills the youth' [to quote the Cameroonian hip-hop artist, Valsero, who has a song by this name, *Ce Pays Tue Les Jeunes*]...

When he asked me about the employment context in the US and the UK, I explained that family members are often expected to find employment at a young age and that both partners work to support the family. In comparison to this atomised culture, where neighbours often do not communicate with one another and people decline answering their phones in favour of text messaging, he expressed satisfaction with the strong sense of community in Mpango.

I recount this exchange as a means of demonstrating the disconnect between the promise of education versus the problem of pervasive joblessness in post-colonial Cameroon. Moreover, the schoolrooms constructed by the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline were quite literally empty. As I explore below, the impetus for schoolroom construction along the oil pipeline is particularly hollow when situated within the

longer and on-going paradigm of ‘knowledge management’ by the Bank in Cameroon, beginning with its shifting educational paradigms in the 1970s.

C. The World ‘knowledge’ Bank and epistemic dispossession in Cameroon

The oil consortium’s claims that constructing schoolrooms demonstrated efforts to combine oil profit with development for people is increasingly problematic given the Bank’s historical position on, policies for and role in shaping the trajectory of education in Cameroon and in Africa more widely. My cursory overview of the Bank’s policies on African education here reveals three approaches with devastating results: (i) the Bank’s policy, since the mid-1970s, of divesting in African universities through its almost exclusive focus on primary education, going so far as to encourage African students to pursue postsecondary schooling abroad instead of on the continent (Brock-Utne 2003); (ii) the role of the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programs in withdrawing public funding for education and ultimately eliminating free primary school education that had been implemented during the initial post-independence period; and (iii) the Bank’s shift in priorities in the late 1990s (in the midst of wide criticism of structural adjustment on the continent) through its incorporation, mapping and cataloguing of ‘Indigenous Knowledges’ (IK) as important factors for determining economic growth in neoliberal paradigms. This most recent focus has involved appropriating *certain* African knowledges (those deemed valuable by the Bank) within neoliberal projects.

Until the debt crisis of the 1980s—triggered by the nation’s \$785 billion debt—primary education was free in Cameroon (Diang 2013). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank made policy prescriptions for budget

restructuring through the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).⁹ Alongside privatisation and market liberalisation, the IMF and Bank conditionalities included the reduction of public spending across the board, dramatically cutting funding for education (Mamdani 1993). Public expenditures for education fell in Cameroon from 3.8 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1991 to 1.5 per cent in 1995 (Lambert 2004: 4), leading to the implementation of school fees for primary and secondary school students (Diang 2013: 38) and a cut in teachers' salaries by 60 per cent in 1993, a 'strategy [that] is coherent with the World Bank recommendation... that hiring should be made at a lower cost' (Lambert 2004: 4 and 2). Stacy Hardy (2014: 16) describes this period:

from the beginning of the 1980s, subsidies to students were reduced or terminated, academic wages were frozen to the point of asphyxia, grants for research were eliminated, and investment in the universities' infrastructure was drastically cut. Scholars were forced to either supplement teaching with consultancy work or, whenever possible, migrate, usually to Europe or North America. In five short years, from 1985 to 1990, 60,000 African intellectuals and professionals emigrated to the West.

The loss of government-funded primary education had material consequences for Cameroon, not only the under-training of intellectuals but also the loss of trained educators as they migrated elsewhere for superior positions, salaries and career paths. Forced to practice the survival technique of *se débrouillage*, teachers looked outside the classroom to supplement non-living wages; 74.2 per cent of Cameroonian teachers in one study's sample held second jobs (Lambert 2004). Cameroon, a forerunner in literacy and enrolment rates on the continent during the late 1970s to early 1980s, witnessed its educational sector shrivel and literacy rates stagnate. Enrolment, at 91 per cent in 1990, dropped to 74 per cent in 1995 (Lambert 2004: 5).

⁹ Later renamed Poverty Reduction Support Credits or PRSC by the Bank and Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility or PRGF by the IMF.

At approximately the same time that the SAPs imposed reduced funding for social welfare programmes and civil servant positions, the Bank shifted lending priorities from higher to primary education while encouraging ‘bilateral donors and African governments to do the same’ as part of its universal education for all initiative set forward in its 1974 Education Sector Working Paper (Brock-Utne 2003: 27). Despite the promising sound of the initiative, it would have devastating consequences for the state of higher education across the continent (Brock-Utne 2003). Mahmood Mamdani (1993: 10) explains the extent of the Bank’s undervaluing of African universities, ‘At a meeting with the African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986, the World Bank argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury: that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas’. At the same time the Bank was arguing that ‘higher education in Africa was a luxury’, the enrolment rates in Cameroonian universities increased dramatically, from 35 students in 1961 to 41,000 students in 1992 (Diang 2013: 38). Students rose up against the abolition of subsidies and the lack of educational infrastructure that resulted from these ‘development’ policies; it was student pressure and protests that led to the creation of the universities of Buea, Ngoundere and Douala (Diang 2013: 38 and 40; Nyamnjoh, Konings and Nkwi 2012).

The late 1990s—as the Bank was committing to loan money to Chad and Cameroon for the development of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline—witnessed a re-marketing of the Bank’s knowledge in development. The Bank’s then president, James Wolfensohn, declared, ‘knowledge is a powerful poverty-reduction instrument in its own right’ (qtd. in Hardy 2014: 16). Knowledge was harnessed for ‘capacity building’, which was shorthand for ensuring economic growth. This transformation in Bank policies and ideology towards African education and knowledge was felt in (i)

the ‘professionalisation’ of African intellectuals via Bank training and courses for economic and political managers, administration and ministers and (ii) the ‘harnessing’ of Indigenous Knowledge (or, ‘IK’ as the Bank referred to Indigenous ways of knowing) for the Bank’s agendas. The Indigenous Knowledge for Development Project was launched by the African department of the Bank in 1998 to, according to the Bank’s Africa Region Chief Knowledge Officer, Nicolas Gorjestani (2000: 1), ‘facilitate the integration’ of Indigenous Knowledge within the Bank’s development projects.

The lack of funding has resulted in the under-resourcing of African universities and a rise in the ‘consultancy syndrome’, as professors seek part-time consultancy positions with development agencies such as the World Bank to supplement their incomes (Nyamnjoh 2004: 171; Mamdani 2011). In the new paradigm, the Bank, according to Wolfensohn (2004: vii), ‘articulated a vision... to become a “Knowledge Bank” that intermediates ideas as well as financial resources’. In order to ‘intermediate ideas’, the Bank undertook a remarkable re-engagement with higher education in Africa, including the appropriation of adult education (once dismissed as ‘luxury’): the ‘professionalisation’ of the consultants needed to promote the neoliberal agenda of the Bank through Bank-sponsored training programmes. As Michael Goldman (2005: 99 of 3817) explains, the Bank ‘deploy[s] professionals around the world to help mainstream Bank-style development into government agendas, investment portfolios, civil-society activities, and the global political economy’. Goldberg (2005: 12) emphasises that

the World Bank is much more than a single entity with a singular agenda and easily ascribed “impacts.”... it should be understood as a productive agent maintained through its interactions in multiple sites (from MIT’s economics department to Wall Street investment firms and Cargill’s agroindustrial goods division in the United States...) enabling a diverse set of elite projects, with deeply exploitative effects. The argument is not that the world is run by the

World Bank president, but rather that the global political economy has at its core a set of elite power networks in whose reproduction the World Bank is deeply embedded.

The Bank pushed forward with sweeping training initiatives across the African continent, including the creation of the Bank's African Virtual University (AVU) in 1997. A complex set of institutions and frameworks simultaneously participate in the articulation, circulation and ideational hegemony of the Bank's self-referencing feedback loops, including research hubs, data sets, professionals, multinational firms, transnational development agencies, government and nongovernment agencies, and policies (Goldman 2005).

The 'professionalisation' programmes were part of the trend towards educational neoliberalisation and what Mamdani (2011) calls the NGO-isation of universities, in which the scholarship and research of African-based academics reflects (indeed, this is increasingly a global trend)—in large part due to funding constraints—the trends of international development organisations such as the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) or the Wellcome [sic] Trust (Mamdani 2011).¹⁰ I do not mean to suggest that there has been a wholesale indoctrination through the Bank's plethora of workshops, training seminars and courses, which focus on topics ranging from water privatisation to 'environmentally sustainable development' (Goldman 2005). Michael Goldman's ethnography of the Bank reveals the lucidity of those who

¹⁰ Following the global trends of the corporatisation and neoliberalisation of higher education since at least the 1990s, researchers on a global scale compete for an increasingly reduced pool of funding. Yet, however reduced funding may be in institutions located in North America or Western Europe, these geopolitical areas continue to have significantly more research funding available than in African universities (with major distinctions within universities on the African continent as well, including the historic dominance of the universities of Southern Africa). At the same time, university salaries are far more in North America and Western Europe, *sometimes* allowing academics to draw from salaries for research expenses.

participate in Bank sponsored training programmes. He reflects on a training session with people from Anglophone African countries, who expressed ‘amusement’ on the ‘inapplicability of the Bank’s models and assumptions for Africa’ and a more realistic commentary of, ‘[at least] with this training certificate [from the Bank], I’ll be getting plenty of jobs back home with international organisations’ (Goldman 2005: 3).

The Bank has demonstrated its aptitude for incorporating within its frameworks the languages of projects for social and environmental justice, including, for example, the appropriations of gendered, ecological (‘green’) and Indigenous knowledges and vocabularies, perpetually transforming its knowledge paradigm to address the social pressures of the time, albeit through an abstract, apolitical and decontextualised *langue de la bouche*. This *langue de la bouche* professes poverty reduction, individual enrichment and sustainable development in the face of seventy years of liberal and neoliberal economic ‘development’ policies that have heralded retrenchments of poverty, growing income inequality, ecological destruction and sustained or exacerbated inequality between the sexes (Sachs 1992; Escobar 1995; Goldberg 2005).

A leaked presentation prepared during a World Bank Group Change Process Working Group retreat from 15 May 2013, titled, ‘Preliminary Recommendations for Working as One World Bank Group’, illustrates that the continued importance of ‘knowledge management’ in the Bank’s projects. Page 4 of the hand-out indicates that, ‘managing knowledge flows across the matrix’ is the second agenda point for its ‘Change Team Architecture’ of 2013, whose goals are to reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity:

Core to the Bank's comparative advantage is its global knowledge and its ability to combine knowledge across a number of disciplines to assist clients in finding the best solutions to their development challenges (WB Change team Architecture 2013: 2).

The directive is to move from an

unclear, lending-focused strategy and multiple organisations and sub-optimal business models, with multiple goals and multiple strategies —> To... One aligned, growing, more relevant WBG, with a common vision and clear strategy delivering distinctive development results by leveraging our knowledge, financing and convening power and influence and mobilize internal and external resources at scale (WB Working As One 2013: 4).

In a context that prioritises the ‘leveraging [of Bank] knowledge’ and highlights the need to ‘conven[e] power and influence to mobilize...resources’, the Bank announced that its International Development Association (IDA) will loan US\$150 million to 19 centres of excellence at universities in seven West and Central African nations, including Cameroon. This signals another transformation in the Bank’s policies for education in the region. The finances for the project, *Africa Centers of Excellence* (ACE), are to be mobilised selectively for specialised topics targeted by the Bank’s policy priorities, among them science, technology, engineering, mathematics, agriculture and health. The Bank’s press release reads:

Africa needs its own research and innovative solutions to tackle its development challenges ... the researcher-to-population ratio is very low in African countries... The new Bank-financed ACEs offer a regionally integrated way to increase high-quality R&D [research and development] services that will help meet these challenges (WB Press Release 15 April 2014).

This new prioritisation of African university infrastructure in Bank lending is being conducted without a historical context of the systematic divestment in such institutes under the Bank’s priorities for the last 35 years. After overseeing the defunding of intellectual hubs, the Bank has reasserted itself as an authority on knowledge creation and education, imposing its policy priorities and frameworks. This obfuscation of history and politics enables hegemonic institutions, like the World Bank, *Forbes* or the Global Wealth Reports, to retain their seemingly natural roles as global

‘knowledge producers’, reporting on wealth and poverty in ways which ‘mollify’ the realities and ensure a continuation of the neoliberal paradigm (Brock-Utne 2003).

The Bank operates through self-reproducing, self-referencing, decontextualized feedback loops constituted in its own expansive infrastructures (Brock-Utne 2003; Goldberg 2005), at the centre of which is the ideological base of colonial knowledge, in its ever-changing face. Incorporating resistance epistemes within its neoliberalised technocratic framework, it is precisely through the use of language—the language of the mouth—that this violence is perpetuated. In this context, non-capitalist, anti-colonial and decolonial intellectual endeavours must move beyond the discourse of ‘incorporation’ within the ‘sanitised technical narrative’, wherein ‘Indigenous knowledges’ are incorporated within projects of neoliberal social-ecological exploitation (Jackson 2009: 13). Instead, we assert the proper relevance of people’s insights and experiences for their inherent value.

In the two previous sections, I have sought to contextualise *la langue de la bouche*, highlighting the role of the World Bank (as the most significant actor in pushing forward with and conferring legitimacy to the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline as a development project) in shaping and hindering knowledge creation and perpetuating epistemological dispossession in post-colonial Cameroon. A decolonial project must seek to de-privilege the Bank’s claims to authority through its economic ‘science’ of development. As a researcher embedded within this context, how might I endeavour to orient my intellectual decolonial project in a way that suits the needs of the communities where I work? Through which methodologies might I engage with communities in ways that move beyond incorporation or inclusion (both of which presume a normative horizon of the possible), beyond author-centred immobility and beyond policy-oriented claims to authority? The Bank’s neoliberal apparatus makes

claims to incorporate ‘Indigenous Knowledges’ within large-scale modernisation projects like the pipeline that disposes and impoverish people¹¹; how might I look at and write on people’s lives in context, in a respectful way, in way that does not begin or end with the postulation that people in Nanga and Kribi are problems that must be resolved to ensure ‘development’, ‘economic growth’, or ‘progress’? In short, what are intellectual ethe that move (or begin moving) beyond *la langue de la bouche*?

Section II: a decolonising ethos

Vivons seulement! Amidst the spectre of death—on est déjà die ici au pays (‘we are already dead’ in Camfranglais)—is the celebration of life, conveyed through the expression ‘vivons seulement’ (just live). Decolonising ethe focus on projects of healing, dignifying and advancing a community (not a discipline) as a means of breaking from the trajectory of colonialism and the colonality of power (Quijano 2000); these orientations firmly centre life (human, animal, plant) in the knowledge project, differentiating decolonial thought from conventional scholarship, where the transformation of the discipline and making a contribution to theory is the central focus.

A.) A grounded ethical and political orientation attentive to people

The Pan-Africanist and historian, Walter Rodney (1969), engaged in what he called ‘groundings with [his] brothers’. Rodney’s method of groundings is a means to focus on the historical materialism of structural violence from a holistic standpoint as well as contributing to the destabilisation of fields of academic engagement that create

¹¹ Elsewhere, I look at the framework of structural violence—the nexus of power, knowledge and capital through which dispossession occurs—which produces and sustains projects like the pipeline and the ways in which people in Nanga and Kribi challenge, resist, and articulate power (Murrey 2015).

boundaries between academic theory—a language of the mouth—and life ‘on the ground’. Through the practice of grounding, the spatial-power distinctions between institutions of learning and open, participatory discussion were blurred. Rodney explains, ‘I would go further down into West Kingston and I would speak wherever there was a possibility of our getting together. It might be in a sports club, it might be in a schoolroom, it might be in a church, it might be in a gully’ (1969: 64). Importantly, ‘[he] was prepared to go anywhere that any group of black people were prepared to sit down and talk and listen... a sitting down together to reason, to “ground” as the Brothers say. We have to “ground together”’ (Rodney 1969: 78).

the thwak-thwak-thwak of flip-flops
 n’a hao massa ?
 clap, snap, chuckle—a handshake
 a salut au quat
 comment ?
 mbom c’est hao ?
 breathless wonderment entre les pôtes
 clap and slow parting of synchronised hands¹²

Through groundings, Rodney sought to connect with ‘ordinary people’ on subjects of socio-political and historical importance. He situated his view *from the ground* and had an abiding respect for moments of consciousness raising and intellectual vibrancy with non-academics. In my project, I mix the methods of filmmaking, storytelling, phenomenology, and conversational narratives from houses, restaurants, bars and roadsides as a way of engaging with local practices of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing.

Formulating research ethics beyond the language of the mouth has prompted (re)articulations of the art of storytelling (Chi’XapKaid 2005) and techniques based on indigenous language frameworks such as ‘talk stories’ and ‘talk circles’ (Chilisa

¹² Poem by author.

2012: 23). Talking circles, for example, is a circular manner of speaking that allows people to approach topics of violence and hardship indirectly. Conversations, talking and storytelling seek to respect people's memories and natural forms of dialogue and trains of thought. Conversation, talking and storytelling demand mindfulness of people's considerations and their diverse insights, while allowing for pluriform manners of telling.



Figure 12. Recently cleared pipeline right-of-way, with pump reduction station visible in background. Near Mpango, outside Kribi, Cameroon.

Part of the effort to emphasise a connectedness with a community is the desire for research to engage simultaneously in collective political empowerment, psychological emancipation and communal memory making (enormous projects, I know, and I do not mean to be overly ambitious or naïvely romantic). Here, theory is not the fundamental research output; rather, 'the goal is the change that this

knowledge will help bring about’ (Wilson 2008: 37). Reporting back and sharing knowledge over an extended period of time are other important commitments for indigenous approaches (Smith 1999: 16). In this accountability paradigm, ‘pamphlet knowledge’ (surface knowledge) is insufficient; instead, the researcher is responsible for ‘shar[ing] the theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented’ (Smith 1999: 17). This includes something like ‘speaking truth to power’ and demystifying *la langue de la bouche* in the communities where we work, as well as writing for non-academic, activist and beginner audiences (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2005; Wilson 2008; Chilisa 2012). Film, while not without its flaws, is an accessible method for sharing the research product with the people involved and is a powerful tool to create an egalitarian space. Film can be a particularly powerful tool for PhD candidates, who remain relatively disempowered within academic institutions, particularly in terms of how they must approach ‘the field’ and write their intellectual contributions to substantiate their individual legitimacy (including requirements to write for a narrow audience, drawing heavily from established theoretical approaches, so as to demonstrate aptitude within a deliberately selective field of vision); requirements which are often counterintuitive to efforts for substantive collaboration and co-creation.

In my case, I collaborated with Cameroonian visual and musical artists—including my Cameroonian spouse, Derogy—to film, edit and screen a 45-minute video of the project. The video was intended to be an empowering, memory-making artistic tool and it featured local stories, moments, interactions and landscapes with little narrative voice-over. The Cameroonian hip-hop and reggae artist formerly of the group Sumanja, Christian Soumalek, did the voiceover for an approximately three-minute section of the film, which explains the multiple consequences of soil erosion

and the pipeline's heating of the soil; otherwise, the film provides no outside commentary. The end of the project was marked with a community film screening, as people's stories were valorised in ceremony form. The family and community are of central importance in Cameroon, where births, christenings, weddings, graduations, les deuils (mourning periods and funeral celebrations) and returns from long voyages are occasions for gatherings, celebrations and ceremonies. Such events generally include eating, drinking, dancing, singing, joke-telling, and storytelling, often late into the night. In this context, we held public screenings, debated, drank matango (palm wine) and ate roasted sheep, stewed pigs and les batons de manioc (cassava that is



ground, dried, rolled and cooked in banana leaves). Afterwards we listened to music and danced, once until the chief's brother told everyone to go home around 5am. Everyone was given a DVD after the screening.

Figure 13. Disc cover for project's pipeline film.

The screenings were a way to honour the stories shared, they were small tokens of remerciement and they were platforms for exchange. In Nanga, we rented a generator and a projector as the village was not electrified and we used a bed sheet as the screen. There were over one hundred people present, many with questions, comments and ideas for future projects. These dialogues, as Patricia Noxolo (2008) writes of her own PhD research, begin and continue 'across difference': the conversations we shared, moments we created and relationships we created, while powerful in meaning making and for revealing potentialities of empowerment, should

not be romanticised nor exaggerated. The writing of a PhD thesis (as this work along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is part of) is a deeply individualistic endeavour; for an aspiring decolonial scholar, the process is rife with a mix of painful confusion, disillusion and doubt, as the apertures between intentions and realities expand during the write-up process.

B.) Relationships are central to decolonising how we create knowledge/how we know

On est ensemble: we are together. Relationships are a basic edifice in our sense(s) of being in the world and are bound up with our senses of being in-place. The South African ontology of ubuntu asserts that we are people only through our relationships with other people, further destabilising Descartes' assertion, 'je pense, donc je suis'. A more relational, sustainable conception of the world is one in which 'I am because you are'. In decolonising ethe, relationships are central to life, research, cosmology and ontology. Wilson (2008: 39 and 80) argues that an 'axiology of relational accountability' is central—so central that, 'we are the relationships that we hold'. A researcher's relationship with the community informs the knowledge that emerges from the project. How we speak to others, are spoken to, embraced, pushed away are significant in shaping the form that knowledge creation takes.

Carina was pregnant with her first child when I was living with her and her family in Kribi in early 2013. She worked full-time as an administrator at a Spanish non-profit hospital just outside of town and her husband, Eddy, was an Evangelical pastor. They live in a three-bedroom house and at the time, in the middle of the dry season and the hottest period of the year, we seemed to spend most of our time together fanning our faces and complaining in creative and humorous ways about the heat. Because it was the height of the dry season and Cameroon gets most of its power

in hydroelectric form, there were scheduled power outages daily; this was quite different from the spontaneous cutting of power in Nanga, where it was not unusual to go several days without electricity.



Figure 14. Nadine—whose provocative words on the ‘language of the mouth’ inspired my reflection here—and I dance together after the screening of the project’s film. Nanga, Cameroon.

Carina was nineteen and called me ‘grande soeur’ or ‘maman’. I was 26 and a mother of my own little girl. Motherhood in Cameroon, as in other African cultures, is a communal responsibility and connotes a passing along of bodily knowledge, where becoming a mother is to become *maman* to the community for the rest of your life. Carina and I spoke often and at length of the joys and struggles of having children and many of our conversations centred on her anxiousness of the impending labour. As the birthing neared, Carina went to live with her grandmother in her maternal village,

as is the custom amongst the Mabi, as an experienced mother cares for the woman and baby.

my baby's chubby legs kick
drinking thick smooth yogurt
with bits of papaya
clean like laundry soap on our tongues

hardboiled eggs and *pigment*
displayed in clear plastic containers
all that eager undertaking
of sunrise *beignet-jazz*
sizzling *poisson braisé*
matango so sweet and warm the flies die in the cup¹³

My role as a mother flavoured many of my relationships in Cameroon, where my knowledge as a mother was often more respected than my knowledge as a graduate student. More than this, my daughter and spouse are Cameroonian. We were told several times that I was entrusted with knowledge, particularly in Nanga, based on my personal commitments and the sense that I could not 'betray' my friends and family by appropriating knowledge to be used for another, unspoken, end.¹⁴ My position in Nanga and Kribi is, of course, highly ambiguous¹⁵ and the trust people endowed to me must be reciprocated with respect and honesty.

Everyday, I would go out to the smaller villages around Kribi, to listen to stories of how women and mothers were affected by the passage of the pipeline. Mothers and their children who live along the pipeline face a number of augmented

¹³ Poem by author.

¹⁴ This fear of betrayal echoes Nadine's frustration over the language of the mouth, as scholars and researchers do not create ties in the communities where they work, leaving communities fearful and suspicious of those who follow.

¹⁵ This ambiguity includes my age, an identity marker which is rarely discussed in reflections on positionality, but which is of enormous importance in social hierarchies and in informing interpersonal perceptions in Cameroon. In my case, my body reads as that of a young girl (17 – 23 years old), a factor that, along with my gender, further de-privileges me as 'an expert' (a role that I actively seek to deconstruct through conversations in lieu of interviews). At the same time, my whiteness and American citizenship provide enormous privileges.

dangers, including malnutrition, food insecurity, malaria, poor water quality, and declining household income. Manioc, or cassava, is a foundational foodstuff of people in both Nanga and Kribi and is consumed in multiple forms: the leaves are used for stews and the tuber is cooked and eaten sliced or ground as beignets, couscous (foufou/fufu) and batôns (sticks). Women farm the cassava and groundnuts, while the men cultivate cash crops. Women in both Nanga and Kribi indicated that the heat and moisture from the pipeline caused cassavas to under-produce or to rot in the soil before reaching maturation, increasing the danger of undernourishment in a country where three in four children are malnourished, according to Georges Okala, a nutrition specialist in Cameroon's Ministry of Health (IRIN 2013). During a conversation in the outside cooking area next to her house, Nadège explained that women in Nanga abandoned their familial agricultural plots to venture farther and farther each day to cultivate. These experiences of motherhood along the pipeline emphasise the need for an attention to embodied conditions and suffering of the people where we work. By beginning our research projects as co-productive intellectual friendships founded on honesty and respect, we can connect and celebrate in meaningful ways with the communities where we work.

A focus on relationships has potentials for developing alternative modes of knowledge creation that are potentially capable of challenging the individualising logic of neoliberal capitalism. Of course, as we race towards deadlines or slump in our office chairs for hours, our desires for knowledge through collaboration threaten to be stymied by other pressures, despite our hunger for sustained and meaningful collaborative relationships. During those times, we need to be reawakened; we need to be reminded to do more than speak *la langue de la bouche*.

I have forgot you
oh without
I have forgot my morning prowl
down Mfoundi canal
I have forgot my interminable treks
past the oh-so-ugly hovels of Essos Nkoldongo
I have forgot the deaf-making clamour of your markets
louder than the Lobé falls
I have forgot the polyphonic horn blasts of your cars
in the muddy boroughs
I have forgot your steaming stewing cassava
each morning beside the road¹⁶

By way of conclusion

‘On arrive’: we are coming. We are leaving, but also invariably turning, returning. In Cameroon, to tell someone, ‘j’arrive’ or ‘on arrive’ indicates a circular motion: the person is on the way out the door but instead of emphasising the departure or absence (and thus declaring, ‘je pars’ or ‘je m’avais’), going is a perpetual return: I am coming. I am coming back here, back to you, even as I leave. ‘On est ensemble’. Every departure entails a return.

In the current moment of neoliberal capitalist global expansion and its concurrent manifestations of the commercialisation of land, landlessness, land grabs, displacement, displacement in-place, and place-based struggles, an ethos that returns to the ground and is grounded by human dialogue and human voice is immanently urgent. At the same time, the historic centres of global knowledge production are being continuously ruptured and displaced: ‘Knowledge, like capitalism, no longer comes from one centre; it is geographically distributed’ (Mignolo 2013: para. 1). The ground that we walk on, the buildings that we inhabit, the air that we breathe, the food that we eat, the people that we engage with, and the language that we speak are all

¹⁶ From, *I have forgot you oh without*, by the Cameroonian poet, Enoch Meyomesse (translated by Katy Thompson), currently imprisoned in Yaoundé’s Kodgengui prison for political activism.

ingredients that shape knowledge in particular ways. Who we are with on the ground and how we consciously politically and ethically orient our intellectual projects are all decisive in shaping social worlds, politics and imagination.



Figure 15. Community screening of the project film. The location is a rarely used, one-room building constructed by COTCO as part of a community compensation effort for those negatively affected by the pipeline project. The building (like the nearby villages) is non-electrified and a generator was used to project the film. There was a petroleum shortage on the evening of the screening and many people were forced to attend **on foot**. Motorcycles lined the roadway to the event, abandoned where they ran out of petroleum.

A range of intellectual efforts have sought to ‘decolonise knowledge’ and yet many times such efforts are made with little ‘specification of the meanings and processes implicated in the decolonization of knowledge regimes linked to (post)colonial global order’ (Shilliam n.d.). Creating and sustaining ethical and political ethe (plural of ethos) for the decolonisation of knowledge obliges us to create and sustain collectives within and without the academy. The reproduction of the

neoliberal academy—in which scholars and thinkers are isolated and individualized in a manner which demobilises and actively de-collectivises—constrains the places and avenues through which we might support and care for one another, and yet this focus on care and responsibility is vital to the success of emancipatory projects (Raghuram, Madge and Noxolo 2008).

Nurturing a politically and ethically conscious ethos attuned to people and relationships is an approach useful for navigating the entangled histories of colonialism and the imbalances of power within the creation of knowledge. The place where we think is a geopolitical and metaphysical space; it is a place ‘that has been configured by the colonial matrix of power’ (Mignolo 2011: xvi). Knowing where and how we are on the ground entails a deep contextualisation of the socio-political and historical spaces in which decolonial intellectual projects find footing, including attention to where and by whom they are grounded. These approaches refrain from claims to absolute authority and challenge the positivist notions of objective knowledge that are central to the operating mechanisms of neoliberal projects, including the multiple powerful actors of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. This is an ethos that is questioning, humble and grounded in the respectful turn and return to the voices and stories of people. A conscious dwelling place unsettles privileges of the author through both the approaches to knowledge creation (co-creation through conversation and story) as well as forms of knowledge expression (poetry, story and narrative). It is an approach that is forever mindful of the language of the mouth.

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Article II
Narratives of Life and Violence
Along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline¹

Abstract

As a means to articulate further a critical geographical theory of structural violence, this article considers the ways in which people in Nanga-Eboko and Kribi, two communities in Cameroon, report feeling and experiencing structural violence along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. For people who live within spaces (re)produced through structurally violent processes, projects, and extractions, a triad of intersecting experiences of structural violence emerge: structural violence is felt as (i) *tangible through the body* (senses of loss, the belly, the body, and nourishment), or described through gendered narratives of hunger, illness, and the experiences of land dispossession; (ii) *historically compounded*, or characterized by a rootedness in the colonial and racist structures of the past alongside expectations that present-day structural violence threatens future generations; and (iii) *spatially compounded*, or experienced through a concurrent spatial overlapping (or compounding) as multiple forms of structural violence converge within the same landscapes and lifescapes, effecting displacement in-place. Each of these, felt simultaneously, has the effect of rendering structural violence *acutely visible*, tangible as it is in the restructurings of landscapes and lifescapes, despite discursive attempts to cloak, bury, and efface by powerful actors. Looking toward the narratives that people use to critique and engage with such violence provides conceptual tools for wider resistance practices against structural violence.

Keywords: displacement in-place; hunger; oil pipeline; politics of visibility; structural violence²

Introduction

Outside the rural town of Nanga-Eboko (hereinafter Nanga, as it is called by the people who live here) in central Cameroon, I saw the first physical evidence of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline: a semi-destroyed worker's base camp.

The camp was used temporarily during the pipeline's construction phase between 2000 and 2003 to house and feed migrant laborers as well as to store the

¹ Article published (2015) in *Human Geography – A New Radical Journal* 8(1).

² Acknowledgments: This research was funded through a Clarendon Fellowship at the University of Oxford. Travel to Cameroon was partially supported by Jesus College, Oxford. I had fruitful and insightful conversations with colleagues on my approach to structural violence, particularly Dali Islam and Patricia Daley. Audience members at the 8th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference at the Centre of Applied Philosophy Politics and Ethics (CAPPE) at the University of Brighton, UK provided critical feedback on my theory of structural violence. I am thankful to the African and African Diaspora Studies Program at Boston College, which supported me throughout my final year of writing as the 2014/15 Dissertation Write-Up Fellow.

project's heavy equipment. With the air fresh and moist in the height of rainy season, I was visiting with two brothers, Daniel and Simon, who live in the homes nearest the remains of the base camp. Walking along the muddy path towards the brothers' groundwater source, we looked down the hill to the area where the work camp once was, now a vast expanse of exposed red earth with a few scattered buildings (Figures 16 and 17). After the construction phase ended in the area, the roofs of the concrete buildings were torn off and the insides of the buildings were gutted, exposing the concrete foundations to the elements. The remaining concrete walls were heavily cracked and thick with underbrush. Glass shards and torn bits of linoleum were cast haphazardly on the ground. Anything of value that might have been left had long since been picked over. Consortium documents assert that, "after construction...the site of the construction camp would be returned to its natural contours and grade and topsoil returned to those areas where it was removed" (3.2.1.2 Esso Chad/Cameroon 1997: 3-6); this area had not been returned to its natural contours.

The brothers, Simon Akono and Daniel Nkouma, spoke at once, "You wouldn't know it ever existed, but the work camp was like a town. It was bigger than the town, even—*it moved*."³ The abandoned buildings—once the offices, sleeping quarters, ablution units, laundry units and recreation hall—were all that remained above ground. Later, in Nanga, I was told that the heavy equipment used during the

³ Some names have remained unchanged while others have been altered to preserve anonymity (each reflects the personal preference of the person). In a project concerned with recovering, uncovering, and creating space for people's voices, lives, ontologies and epistemologies, I felt that a discursive violence would be effected by effacing the names of those who specifically requested that I not do so. Many of the people whom I spoke with were adamant that their stories be heard, powerfully asserting *their right to be known*—not as a number, a euphemism, or a pseudonym, but as themselves. The literature on power and politics in ethnographic research almost uniformly espouses the need for anonymity, emphasizing the researcher's position of power and privileging the researcher's ability to consider the dangers of revealing people's identities. In this case, dismissing people's demands to have their names recorded would be a discursive injustice. There is no indication of which names have been changed for anonymity and which have not.

construction phase was demounted and buried there. To the people who believe this story, the place is a burial ground.



Figure 16. Abandoned building, former pipeline work camp, outside Nanga.

We bypassed the camp on our way to the men's post-pipeline water source, walking along the large road, which was wide enough for two vehicles to pass easily despite the almost complete lack of vehicles in Nanga (where *bensikiners*⁴ or motorcycle taxis predominate). The road was built to facilitate the work along the pipeline but is now used by local foot and motorcycle traffic as well as logging rigs. We left the main road as it split off to a footpath, leading down to a small ravine. My rain-boots slipped several times on the muddy rocks and I wondered at the technique

⁴ Following decolonial critiques of linguistic Anglo-centrism, non-English words are not italicized, not placed in quotations, and not visually set apart from English here. The visual practices of italicizing or isolating non-English words contribute (even inadvertently) to colonizing projects, labeling non-English languages as aberrant, exotic, or Other.

and skill that one would need to carry a bucket of water on the way back up.

Before the pipeline, the family used a communal well near the work camp. That aquifer had been destroyed during the pipeline's construction and COTCO (the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company), the private company in charge of overseeing pipeline operations in Cameroon, resolved to provide them with a replacement well. We arrived at the end of the trail; the brothers showed me the well that had been constructed to replace the one destroyed by the pipeline. It was faulty, now nothing more than a solid concrete form, slick with mud and disuse. Their family gathers rainwater when they can, the brothers said, otherwise they collect water from where it seeps from the forest floor, just footsteps from the faulty well.



Figure 17. Abandoned building, former pipeline work camp, outside Nanga.

In Cameroon, water related illnesses and the parasitic diseases that thrive in standing water are everyday threats. Onchocerciasis, a parasite transmitted through

the bite of what are locally called les moutmouts (a black fly of the genus *Simulium*), can cause blindness. Months later, I was told by people living in the villages around Kribi, approximately 450 kilometers from Nanga, that the wind tunnel created by the pipeline right-of-way facilitated the spread of les moutmouts to the Kribi area, where they had never before been a problem. There are reports that a number of illegal cost-savings practices were used during the pipeline's construction, including the filling of pipeline trenches with "cement bags mixed with cement and topsoil" instead of the more environmentally safe gabion bags (wire baskets) filled with stones to protect the pipe (Keenan 2005: 402).⁵ Filling the pipeline trench with cement and topsoil causes cement leeching and washout, polluting water sources along the right-of-way with calcium hydroxide (Keenan 2005).

The older brother, Daniel, smiles as he shakes his head. For three years he has struggled with local administration and COTCO to resolve the problem of access to clean drinking water. Daniel is unemployed and, like many Cameroonians, is adept in *se débrouillage* (managing lifetime-unemployment with temporary jobs in a variety of sectors). During the construction period, he was hired temporarily as a "room boy" to clean the worksite-dining hall, wash latrines, and dispose garbage. During the "moment of the pipeline" (the brothers' term for the period of pipeline construction), people jokingly and optimistically called themselves "Americans" because, it was believed, "dollars" would "pour" into the town from oil wealth. The construction period brought a brief but unprecedented influx of cash into Nanga, as subsistence farmers and small-scale commercial farmers were compensated for the destruction of

⁵ These reports are further substantiated through the testimony of Alan M. Dransfield, a former ExxonMobil Engineer who was terminated from the project in 2002 for objecting to what he calls the pipeline's "myriad of H&S (Health and Safety) violations," including failure to install Emergency Shut Down Valves at all major river crossings, insufficient pipeline coating, testing failures, trench backfill violations, welding violations, and an improperly designed and installed fiber optic cable (interview with Alan M. Dransfield, by Djamil Ahmat 2014).

crops, hundreds of migrant laborers consumed local goods, and local men (those employed during construction were almost exclusively male) were employed in temporary labor positions.

The younger brother, Simon, worked “in the ground” laying pipe. As he spoke, he was visibly agitated, waving towards his clothes, dusty and worn, with sizable holes in both trouser knees. Having just returned from the forest, where he taps matango (palm wine), he had his machete in hand. He used it to point at his body, waving the machete from his toes to his head. “Regarde-moi,” he said, “On se retrouve dans la vieille époque, avec toute l’ancienne misère” (look at me—we find ourselves in the olden days, with all of the ancient miseries). He used his body and his clothing as an indication of the pipeline’s cost to the landscape and to people’s bodies, inscribing his body with the history of the pipeline.

As Simon and I spoke, Daniel walked at the edges of the road to avoid sinking into the thick red mud in his blue plastic flip-flops. He stopped to reiterate what his brother said about the miseries of “ancient times,” showing me his puffy right eye. His sclera, or the white of his eye, was a vivid red. He wiped at it periodically with the back of his hand, blinking quickly. As we walked back up the hill towards their homes, we grew quiet and I didn’t ask any more questions. We reached the top of the hill, where a group of neighborhood children were playing. They stopped to hug arms and laugh at me, the sunburned ntangan. They ran towards us, giggling and jumping on the roadside. The air was heavy with the coming rain as we said our goodbyes.

Outline of arguments

Daniel and Simon’s account reveals some of the intersections of the palpable forms of violence brought about through the construction, implementation, and everyday

operations of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline as well as how these are compounded by additional ecological and structural violence(s).⁶ People's narratives along the pipeline merge the experiences of deforestation, land dispossession, pollution and contamination of groundwater, the spread of the moutmout fly, and so on—experiences which have been mostly analyzed in isolation in academic scholarship on the pipeline. A focus on how these forms of violence overlap is meaningful in terms of understanding the *experiences* of the *continuities* of structural violence. By focusing the conceptual lens narrowly on one form of violence, we overlook mutually constituting forms that simultaneously configure landscapes and lifescapes. In this framework, instead of conflating discrete forms of violence within one rubric, we might speak to the experiences of structural violence in Nanga and Kribi as one of an expansive matrix of land dispossession, displacement in-place, and ecological destruction.

The concept of structural violence dates back to Johan Galtung's (1969) work on social position theory, as he worked to develop a holistic lens for the study of social inequality. Galtung, influenced by Latin American liberation theologians, broadened the conceptual lens of violence by arguing that the dominant focus on direct violence—i.e. those violence(s) with precise beginnings and ends as well as clearly identifiable agents—is a restricted focus that omits the structures that frame physical violence as well the ways in which institutions and institutional actors inflict violence. Drawing inspiration from Antonio Gramsci's (1982) analysis of how ordinary people (or “organic intellectuals”) look at and describe political power, combined with critical geography's focus on material, lived, and embodied experiences (Castree et al. 2010)—including the emphasis on the “historical

⁶ Officially titled the *Chad–Cameroon Petroleum Development and Pipeline Project*, the name has been shortened here to reflect its more common nomenclature.

geography of material practice[s]” (Harvey 1996: 183)—I outline a re-articulation of the theory of structural violence by focusing on people’s interpretations and experiences along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline.

One experiential marker of structural violence is the embodied struggles and physical pain(s) resulting from structural forms of violence. These are expressed along the pipeline through gendered narratives of hunger and illness, overlapping and arising out of the cognitive and embodied experiences of land dispossession and “displacement in-place” (Magaramombe 2008; Nixon 2011; Mollett 2014).⁷ Along the pipeline, structural violence is *experienced* as “displacement in-place,” as access to safe drinking water and agriculturally fertile land is severely restricted, leading to illness and aggravating hunger. Displacement in-place is a form of displacement-through-abandonment, as large-scale ecological damage destroys people’s homes, landscapes, and livelihoods without displacing them far from it (physical displacement did happen in some places along the pipeline, at short distances; most land dispossession occurred as plantations were destroyed and familial/communal land was appropriated). Instead of displacing people from their land, the pipeline transformed the landscape, leaving them displaced-at-home with contaminated water sources, soil erosion, deforestation, and oil spill pollution, as revealed through narratives of hunger (from soil erosion and decreased crop yields), illness (from polluted, contaminated, and destroyed water sources), and environmental uncertainty

⁷ I have been unable to determine the precise roots of the concept “displacement in-place” (also displacement-in-place or displacement *in situ*); it emerged in the early 2000s in the literature on development displacement as a means to expand theories of displacement to include non-physical forms. The earliest piece I located is from a paper presentation given by Magaramombe in 2008. Nixon (2011) and Mollett (2014) articulate variations of the concept. Godfrey Magaramombe (2010: 364) articulates displacement *in situ* as the “material and socio-economic losses without enforced movement to different places” or the “social dimensions of displacement beyond physical uprooting.” Building on similar ideas, Sharlene Mollett (2014: 4) explains, “Much displacement does not involve physical movement but takes the form of constraints on livelihoods and cultural practices.”

(Figure 18). At the same time that the landscape is dramatically changing and people are psychologically attending to potential disaster, mobility is constrained by local police, the gendarmerie, and COTCO security guards.



Figure 18. Wind tunnel along the pipeline right-of-way, near Kribi.

A second experiential marker of structural violence is its historical persistence. As structural theorists illustrate, socio-spatial relationships are historically rooted and stretched over time (Giddens 1984). As such, theorists of structural violence, including Galtung (1969), Paul Farmer (2004a, 2004b), Rob Nixon (2011), and Akhil Gupta (2012), agree that this violence is a constant rather than episodic one. Nixon's (2011) notion of slow violence emphasizes the broad temporal and spatial operations of structural violence in the present and towards the future, employing the term as a means of highlighting the "slow moving mutations" of ecological damage and disaster that accompany large scale projects, such as Shell Oil's extraction in the Niger Delta.

Nixon explains that, “time becomes an actor” in the operations of slow violence. While Nixon emphasizes the slowly unfolding nature of structural violence *into the future*, Farmer (2004a, 2004b) emphasizes the *historical rootedness* of this violence in the past, remarking that the violence of slavery, the plantation system, colonialism, patriarchy, and Eurocentrism set the stage for contemporary webs of structural violence by providing the ideological legitimacy, the racial, economic, and gendered hierarchies, as well as the property regimes through which structural violence unfolds. Along the pipeline, the historical duration of structural violence is illustrated in the compounding accounts of pain across time and spatial scales, evidenced in people’s powerful connections between the present and the past, drawing from social memories and consciousness of colonialism, slavery, and past exploitations as a means to characterize the lived experiences of life along the pipeline, described as “encore une autre déception” (yet another deception) or using a language of witchcraft to characterize COTCO personnel and the unseen decision-makers behind the pipeline’s implementation (Murrey 2015).

A third experiential marker of structural violence is its spatial compoundedness, or the coalescence of simultaneous ecological, environmental, social, gendered, dispossessing violence(s) in the same place. The re-articulation of structural violence offered here involves an expansion of our understanding of its experiential effects as spatially compounded: in this sense, the pipeline participates in and aggravates pre-existing structures of violence, as well as perpetuating new forms.

This triad of structural violence indicates the ways in which structural forms of violence are often hyper-visible, in spite of their (apparent) normalization or banalization because they are widespread. People’s narratives reveal that, contrary to much of the scholarship on structural forms of violence, which describes such

violence as invisible, silent, or unseen, structural violence is often acutely visible for people living within structurally violent nexuses. An awareness of this hyper-visibility has significant implications for intellectual projects of social justice that critique and seek to combat structural forms of violence: instead of focusing on the *invisibility* of structural violence, as has been the academic trend, we might consider the ways in which structural violence is acutely visible and the languages used by people to critique, understand, and engage with such violence.

At the same time, this analysis engages with a principal criticism of the theory of structural violence: the argument that structural violence is vague and capacious, to the point of rendering violence “ubiquitous” or everywhere (Wacquant 2004). However, all structural social phenomena are by definition widespread: structural phenomena are built into the very fabric or foundation of social networks, interactions, and exchanges. This is not to assert that all forms of structural violence are uniform or that structural violence entraps people and landscapes uniformly. Rather, focusing assiduously on “one” violence dismisses the systemic (by this I mean the complex and often contradictory, shifting power hierarchies between and within local, national, and transnational spatial scales) institutional realities (always permanently changing form, method, property, and process) which precede and supersede the oil pipeline. So, structural violence is not a theoretical articulation which fails to differentiate or distinguish “important” differences between various forms of violence. Instead, it is a theoretical articulation which actively refuses to be complicit in the historical and geographical decontextualization and artificial separation between forms of violence that are united in their enactments at a distance from those harmed, through multi-scalar transactions that remain out of sight, which are implemented to ensure enormous financial and economic profit for transnational

capital.

Furthermore, by rooting my analysis in a specific temporal and spatial context, I hope to demonstrate that structural violence is a coherent and useful conceptual framework for illustrating the intersections between discrete patterns of violence, including the ways in which different violence(s) are compounded as they are experienced in everyday life. Structural violence, as a broad but coherent force, I argue, is capable of engaging with various discrete forms of violence simultaneously; as such, it is a holistic framework capable of understanding how multiple interacting forces are felt simultaneously. Analyzing them in isolation fails to engage with the immensity of the scope of the violence and performs a decontextualization that can be politically disempowering.

The use of narrative is of central importance here; much of the scholarship on the pipeline has been conducted at the policy-level, through an analysis of the interactions between the World Bank, the oil consortium, the national governments of Chad and Cameroon, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Notable exceptions have been the long-term and ongoing survey-based research among 120 households in three sites in southern Chad, with a focus on health impacts by Siba Grovogui and Lori Leonard. Joyce Endeley and Fondo Sikod's (2007) survey-based research illustrates the depth and complexity of struggles between the state, the community, and the individual over land ownership and resource control in Cameroon, arguing that the pipeline has exacerbated poverty in towns along the pipeline right-of-way. Endeley (2010) highlights the intersections between land dispossession, land tenure, and gender, arguing that because of the male dominated character of the oil industry, women are super-marginalized through the pipeline project: as non-beneficiaries (without access to employment or training opportunities)

as well as by gendered land dispossessions and heightened exposure to environmental damage.

This scholarship importantly highlights the failures of project management and implementation. However, the reflections and narratives of people along the pipeline have remained at the periphery of academic discussions. My approach merges feminist, decolonial and critical geographical standpoints conscious of the geopolitics of knowledge creation and critical of a monolithic, single-voice, and positivist voice; instead, I approach narrative as a mode of knowing and narration as a mode of communication within social science (Cesera 1982; Arguedas 1985; Bruner 1986, 1990; Polkinghorne 1988; Reck 1993). This project was undertaken with a geographical development methodology (Raghuram and Madge 2006) that receives guidance from the concerns and experiences of the people involved in the research and uses film and the subsequent screening of film within the ethnographic context as a means of extending and facilitating people's participation, so that the feedback of community members on the project's conclusions feature significantly. I lived in Kribi and Nanga between July 2011 and March 2012, during which time I interviewed city mayors and pipeline employees, spoke at length with community members, and accompanied people to social gatherings, agricultural fields, and other places of work.⁸ I conducted an extensive review of newspapers and periodicals (including oil-funded marketing prior to the pipeline's construction and local commentary on potential outcomes of the project) and pipeline documents (from ExxonMobil, COTCO, and the World Bank), as well as nonprofit reports written on

⁸ As this is a decolonial project—or a project that seeks to join the ongoing collaborative effort to decolonize knowledge and further challenge the mechanisms of knowing *à la* scientism—I distance myself from terms like “the field,” “the interview,” “the informant,” and “the research subject.” These historically- and spatially-charged categories artificially de-privilege non-academic spaces and people as “knowable” or “researchable” for an empowered researcher, while limiting people's contribution to “knowledge” according to what is perceived to be important according to, and therefore pursued by, “the researcher.”

behalf of people along the pipeline (such as the Forest Peoples Programme and the *Centre Pour l'Environnement et le Développement* in Yaoundé).

I work from a consciousness of my place in the *longue durée* of colonial violence, with an attention to people's narratives alongside an acknowledgement of my incomplete access to them. My intent is to elucidate some of the ways that structural violence is experienced, navigated, and spoken about by those who live in Nanga and Kribi, with an acknowledgement of my presence within the setting where the narratives emerged. This humble consciousness of my place is reflected in the moments where I highlight the knowledge that I don't have and when I trace the moments in which my friends in Cameroon reveal how they might see themselves or me. This is part of working against the established tendency to erase the researcher in ethnographic writing—a convention that seeks validation for “what is known” by erasing the author (and therefore hiding the author's position in the research); Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez (2007) calls this dominant convention of academic writing the “hubris of the zero point.” At the same time, I do not focus centrally on my identity, as the point is not to perform another Eurocentrism by re-centering myself in the narrative. Emphasizing the ways of knowing reflected in people's narratives illustrates the brokenness or non-totality of structural violence, while also stressing the ways that people discuss, name, experience, and are conscious of forms of violence.

Background: Displacement in-place along the pipeline

The Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is the largest private construction project ever undertaken in Africa (Grovogui and Leonard 2007). The oil pipeline pumps approximately 78,000 to 105,000 barrels of crude oil each day from the Doba Basin in

southern Chad along 1,070 kilometers of carbon steel pipe, cutting across the landscape of Cameroon from northeast to southwest. The pipeline's marine terminal is located near Kribi, where an offloading vessel is situated 12 kilometers from the shoreline; from here, the crude is loaded onto tankers and exported for refining and, ultimately, traded on the global market.

With the construction of the pipeline between 2000 and 2003, forests, vegetation, farmlands, ancestral lands, and homes were destroyed along a 30 to 50 meter-wide corridor. A material land space the size of the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) was expropriated—surveyed, staked, cleared, and graded—in Cameroon and southwestern Chad for the anticipated 30-year lifespan of the project. Thousands of families were dispossessed of land. Displacement in-place calls attention to the violent reorganization of space through interrelated and intersecting social and ecological processes as people are not physically displaced from the land but the land is transformed around them. People in Nanga and Kribi have been displaced-at-home with contaminated water sources, soil, and coastal erosion, deforestation, and oil spill pollution. Ecological destruction of land, loss of access to land, displacement in-place, and land dispossession are all kinds of violent spatial transformations brought about by the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline.

The project was promoted by the oil consortium—led by the World Bank—as a “development” project that would ensure the use of oil profits for projects for local wellbeing on the Chadian side of the project, where a number of spending mechanisms were implemented by the Bank, which were violated almost immediately. No such spending limitations were imposed on Cameroon. The oil-for-development discourse failed in both Chad, where President Idriss Déby spent \$3 million USD of the project's signing bonus on arms to fight militias in Northern Chad

in the name of “state security” (Grovogui and Leonard 2007), as well as Cameroon, where the uses of project profits have never been explicitly named. The development discourse finds few echoes in people’s narratives of the pipeline in Nanga and Kribi.

People living in rural and peri-rural areas, like those in the villages around Nanga and Kribi, are exposed to what Ngouo Ngali called “an enforced waiting for death” (“nous sommes obligés d’attendre la mort”). Ngali, the chief of Mpango, the village nearest the pump reduction station outside of Kribi, described the risk of illness that accompanied the spread of the moutmout fly to the area. She said,

Now we are obliged to wait for death. There was one case that I know of, a man temporarily lost his vision and still has a white scar on his eye because the fillet rose to his eyes and caused cataracts. I expect this more and more. I know it happens in different locations... the point is that we are progressively losing life. The risk [of losing life] is there all the time.

The engineers of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline sought to avoid densely populated urban spaces so as to reduce the number of people incorporated; this also meant, however, that Cameroon’s poorest and most politically disenfranchised people would be the most endangered. Eighty-nine percent of Cameroon’s poor live in rural areas (ECAM Three 2007). This has meant that the rural poor, already politically and economically marginalized within Cameroon, have been disproportionately incorporated into the project.

On the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, the population of the community of Kribi is 70,565, 90 percent of whom are under the age of 50 (information provided by the Mission d’Etude Pour l’Amenagement de l’Ocean in Kribi, 2012). With picturesque beaches, waterfalls, and historical monuments, Kribi is one of the foremost tourist destinations in Cameroon. The principal economic activities are artisanal fishing, tourism, logging, and hunting. Nanga-Eboko, with a population of 35,330, is the capital of the Haute-Sanaga (Upper Sanaga) department within the Centre Province of

Cameroon. The Sanaga River, the longest river in Cameroon, splits the community from North to South. The community of Nanga includes 103 villages, each of which has a local chief who is consulted or informed of developments within the communities, including information about the implementation of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. The villages are grouped into separate second-degree chiefdoms, supervised by a *préfet*, who is overseen by a governor (information provided by Kribi's *Préfet* in 2011, Magloire Abath Zangbwala). The chieftaincies were structured as local proxies during the colonial period to sub-divide power and ensure administrative duties were carried out according to the German and later French colonizers (Owona 1973; Guyer 1987; Quinn 2006). The system of chieftaincies remains in place today; this colonial inheritance was integral for the pipeline's land appropriation, as local chiefs played integral roles as go-betweens, calming and reassuring people that the pipeline would be beneficial. This created post-construction tensions, as chiefs now feel betrayed by COTCO representatives at the same time that people are suspicious of their chief's involvement in the project. Likewise, the colonial land tenure system—which established land as property *for men* and deemed all non-deeded land, even if historically occupied, as state owned—remains at the heart of current land policy in Cameroon and continues to facilitate land dispossession in the name of the state.

Tangible violence in-place

While accompanying Nina into Nanga town one afternoon in early September 2012, she explained that her day starts at 6 in the morning. While her mother and sister-in-law generally manage the family's small plot, Nina ventures to the market to purchase meat—mostly bush meat, such as porcupine, from the other side of the

Sanaga River—to cook for migrant laborers. She goes with several women to prepare food for the men who work at the Chinese-owned gravel pit nearby. She doesn't sell to the Chinese bosses, she explains, as they have their own cooks. She takes her five-month-old son, wrapped in *pagne* on her back. Nina has three children, her two eldest live in Douala with her sister and brother-in-law. Her daughter is 16 and is finishing high school next year; she hopes to be a nurse. With her red umbrella in hand to shade her baby boy from the bright midmorning sunshine, Nina was a striking figure. As we walked through her neighborhood, she greeted most of the people walking, including the children in light blue school uniforms. “Is that *you*, already grown up like that?” She teased a young girl. “Is it the hour of prayer already?” she asked and laughed softly to me, “They’ll all run home and tell their friends that they said hello to a white person—and that the white person said hello back.”

When Nina was 20 years old, the pipeline construction crews arrived in Nanga and she, like many of her family members and friends, believed that her life had changed forever. She was approached by a local man and offered monetary reimbursement to sleep with a “Colombian boss” from the ExxonMobil construction crew (a number of Colombian men were employed as welders along the pipeline route). At the time she was making money as a *bayam-sellam* or a *revendeuse* (a small-scale entrepreneur, usually a woman, who independently buys and re-sells goods). She would purchase accessories in Douala and selling them locally for a small profit. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, she could buy a pair of sandals in Douala for 1,000 CFA (approximately \$2 USD) and turn them for a profit in Nanga, selling them for 2,000 to 2,500 CFA (\$5 USD). The flooding of the market with cheap goods, mostly imported from China and increasingly from Dubai, lowered the value and raised the availability of such items; consequently, Nina stopped selling things about

8 years ago. Around the same time, she was diagnosed with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

After the pipeline's passage, the rate of HIV and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) increased exponentially in the community, where the virus had not previously been a problem (Silverstein 2003; Endeley and Sikod 2007). The risk of increased rates of HIV and AIDS in villages along the pipeline route was a form of "collateral damage" for pipeline engineers, who anticipated the temporary increase in sex work with the influx of male migrant laborers (large-scale infrastructural projects nearly always trigger increasing rates of sexually transmitted diseases). Although, according to Madame Lizette, a nurse specializing in the virus who was recruited for the local hospital, measures to mitigate the problem were only taken *after* the passage of the pipeline in Nanga. Now, Nina fatigues easily and she has regular hospital visits to contend with. Nina is also responsible for her younger brother, who was forced to quit school after a sudden and unexplained itching in his foot led to the gradual loss of all feeling and eventually developed into filariasis and elephantiasis of his entire left leg. His illness could be a result of a number of neglected tropical diseases (so named because they are acutely understudied, lack vaccines, and affect only people in tropical zones, where pharmaceutical companies do not earn large profits), including podoconiosis (an abnormal inflammatory reaction to mineral particles in red clay soils) or wuchereria bancrofti (a parasitic roundworm spread by mosquitoes).

Our conversations often revolved around hunger, as Nina worried about having food for herself and her family. She laughed about "les white stars" on TV (although francophone, she said "white stars") who, she said, would surely be jealous of her thin frame. On another occasion, her brother sat eating a plate of boiled plantains and an avocado; she said, "le tchop des hommes célibataires" (single man's food). For

Lizette, Tené, Jean, Simon, Daniel, and many others, hunger was described as a constant, nagging companion. According to Essimi Menye, Cameroon's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, chronic hunger affects one out of every two people in Cameroon (press conference 16 Oct. 2013). Child hunger is particularly pernicious, with Cameroon home to 44 percent of the chronically malnourished children in the 11-member Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS). Twenty percent of Cameroonian children are underweight and more than one in four suffers from stunting resulting from nutrition deficiencies (UNICEF 2013).

For people living in the Equatorial rainforests near Nanga and Kribi, small-scale, rain-fed shifting agriculture is a mainstay of life. Small farming plots are arduously cleared from the thick rainforest growth and are cultivated in a two-field system of gender complementarity that dates back to the pre-colonial period (Quinn 2006: 15-18). In Nanga, men cultivate the *esep* (dry season field), producing plantains, cacao, mangoes, citrus fruit, avocados, and sugar cane. The *afub owondo* (smaller field) produces beans, groundnuts, maize, cassava, yams, potatoes, and other vegetables by women with a shorter hoe (Quinn 2006: 17). These small family-run plots are invaluable, contributing an estimated 90 percent of food consumed in Cameroon (World Food Programme 2012). Although only 13 percent of the land in Cameroon is arable, agriculture (including large industrial plantations) and forestry account for 62 percent of the workforce and 20 and 40 percent of the GDP respectively (World Food Programme 2012).

Cameroon was nutritionally self-sufficient until the early twenty-first century; however, after two decades of neoliberal policy preference from the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the government of Cameroon toward the development of export crops, food farmers have been under-

supported or pushed off their land (DeLancey et al. 2010: 25). At the same time, changing weather patterns, land dispossession, soil erosion, deforestation, rural-to-urban migration, and industrial pollution come together to make farming more difficult than ever. In February 2008, popular discontent at the rising price of petroleum and food (primarily rice and bread but also tomatoes and meat), alongside a constitutional amendment by President Biya to eliminate presidential term limits, gave rise to a series of transportation strikes from taxi drivers and storeowners, effectively shutting down major cities, including Douala and Yaoundé for a week.⁹

If, as Jean told me in Nanga, “le terrain lá, c’est le ventre” (the land is the belly), cassava unifies the land with the belly in central Cameroon. Indeed, cassava is a symbol for the community in some contexts (Richards 1986). “If you take away the land, you have taken from us our food,” Jean told me in Nginda, outside of Kribi. “We cannot ever forget that. So, everyday we think—forever—of that pipe.” People’s narratives connected soil erosion, soil warming, and soil disturbances to chronic hunger, particularly in regards to the tubers consumed for immediate dietary needs.

Following the decline in the global price of cocoa and coffee in the 1980s, Cameroonians diversified agricultural production (which had continued the colonially-enforced system of monocropping, where farmers cultivate cacao, coffee, sugar, and other export-oriented crops exclusively), turning increasingly to cassava (manioc), a tuber and starchy carbohydrate, as a centerpiece in daily diets. As the mainstay of rural household subsistence, cassava is eaten in several different forms, including les batôns de manioc or miondo (cassava soaked in water, pound into a

⁹ The government responded by sending heavily armed gendarmes into the cities and setting up roadblocks to divide the major quarters. After mass arrests and the killing of an estimated 137 civilians (Amnesty International 2009), the protests were suppressed. The government conceded to continue petroleum subsidies (ensuring taxi fares remained low) but pushed forward with the elimination of term limits, allowing Biya to run for a sixth term in the presidential elections in October 2011.

paste, wrapped inside banana leaves, and steamed), le manioc simple (cassava sliced and boiled), and couscous de manioc or fufu/fufu (cassava flaked/graded, dried in the sun, ground into a powder, and then turned quickly as it is added to boiling water). The leaves of the plant are consumed in sauces such as kpwem, a dish that is culturally important for the people of central Cameroon. The transformation of raw cassava into les baton de manioc (for sale at local markets and for transport to the markets of Yaoundé) is a principal source of revenue for women in Nanga. This money helps pay for daily expenses like transport, school, and other material needs.

In Nanga, cassava is consumed daily, alongside avocados, and groundnuts. Meat is consumed rarely, with bifaka or poisson séché (smoked fish) being a more accessible source of protein, particularly in the non-electrified villages around Nanga and Kribi. The overhunting of wild animals for bush meat—according to people in Nanga and Kribi, overhunting has been aggravated by the migrant laborers who come into town for large-scale construction projects as well as loggers (both legal and illegal, see below)—has depleted the forests on the Nanga side of the Sanaga River. The government has responded with a number of anti-poaching efforts, including random stop-and-searches of buses travelling from Nanga to Yaoundé (Figure 19). In this nutritional context, the importance of cassava cannot be overstated.

Cassava is vulnerable to even slight changes in soil temperature; this was emphasized repeatedly in discussions with farmers along the pipeline, who reported that, in the warm and abnormally moist soil along the pipeline, cassava rots in the ground before it reaches maturity. This means that cassava crops must be harvested early when planted along the pipeline right-of-way. The soil disturbances during the construction period (as forests were cleared and leveled) included the mixing of rock, concrete, and debris with nutrient rich topsoil. Root systems derive most of their

nutritious components from the vital topsoil and, according to people's accounts, the topsoil was destroyed after the subterranean installation of the pipeline. Although the oil consortium reports that the topsoil would be "removed, stockpiled and eventually re-spread over the graded area" (3.2.1.2. Esso Chad/Cameroon 1997: 3-4), I was unable to locate photographic evidence that this was the case and oral histories and cultivation difficulties in Nanga and Kribi refute the oil consortium's account. Testimony from ExxonMobil whistleblower and a former engineer of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, Alan M. Dransfield, substantiates the communities' experiences of improper soil redistribution. Numerous accounts from construction employees in Nanga reiterate the seeming disregard for topsoil disturbances.



Figure 19. Sign at Nanga train station, indicating the area's endangered species.

In Nanga, Maman Medgongo explained to me that because she is afraid of an explosion or a fire along the pipeline, she abandoned her pre-pipeline farming plot.

Although informed by COTCO representatives that she could continue to farm cassava and peanuts above the pipeline, she decided to leave the plot as she feared an ecological disaster. The once fertile soil is now barren, she said, mixed with rock and concrete during construction. We were seated on wooden benches outside her home, in a compound shared with her son and his wife. A hen clucked nearby as Maman Medgongo periodically slapped at biting flies with a hand-broom made from the dried stems of palm leaves, tied together with a bamboo string. She explained to me that her new plot is farther from her home and that the distance increases her daily walk to work by 30 minutes. Cassava cultivation is labor intensive, with women often beginning their workdays before 6am and carrying heavy loads of firewood and produce. At nearly 70 years old, she cannot farm “les terrains pas touchés”



Figure 20. Pierre stands atop the pipeline right-of-way, the location of his destroyed plantation, near Kribi.

(uncultivated forest land that has not been cleared). The section of land she now farms had been left to fallow by a younger farmer and as a result, she explained, her plot is over-cultivated and the soil has been stripped of valuable nutrients.

People in the villages near Kribi and Nanga reported changes in growth patterns of cassava above the pipeline. In instances where women tried to continue cultivation after the pipeline's construction, I was told,

The pipe is hot, it burns women's plantations.

At 20 meters, the cassava is still disturbed by the heat of the pipe.

Since the pipeline has passed, the cassava is rotten.... we have famine since the pipeline.

In Nanga, COTCO representatives told people that they could continue to plant above the pipeline area but only those crops with short root systems, such as groundnuts and cassava; this was not the case in Kribi, where COTCO apparently altered planting regulations *after* construction was completed (this is one indication of non-unified policies along the pipeline, where one community is told one policy and another is told something different). Ndgila André, in Mpango, a village outside of Kribi, explained the paradox of cultivation along the pipeline,

At first, they [COTCO personnel and community liaisons] told us that we could cultivate atop the passage [of the pipeline], but only those plants that were quick to mature. Then shortly after the construction [was complete], they told us that it is strictly illegal to cultivate along the passage. We know that they just made promises [of continued farming prior to the construction] to pacify people.

For these reasons, people emphasized greater hunger and declines in production following the pipeline's construction. As we stood atop the pipeline, in the location of his former plantation, long destroyed by the pipeline (Figure 20), Pierre told me,

Since the pipeline has been installed, nothing grows well. We have no proof, but we know that is how it is. It hurts inside. It honestly, seriously hurts. But who will listen to me? Agriculture is how I live. It is how I feed my children and my grandchildren... For the loss of our food, I cannot call it reimbursement—I call it mockery. They mocked us.

Both Jean and Tené described hunger as the “first thought in the morning” and “the last thought at night.” Hunger was less spoken about in Kribi, which has a healthy tourist economy and greater access to animal protein in the form of fish, although the fishing sector has likewise suffered after a large section of coral reef (important habitat for marine life) was dynamited during the construction of the pipeline. The impact on Kribi’s artisanal fisheries is incalculable because oil consortium environmental baseline studies did not comprehensively gather fishing data (Schwartz and Nodem 2009). In Ebomé, outside Kribi, the chief told me,

You know, here on the coast, we fish to feed our children [but COTCO] broke our rocks that [used to] hide the fish. They said they would build an artificial rock habitat but that never worked. Then, the petroleum that leaks in the ocean has already ran off many, many fish.

The destruction and contamination of groundwater abstraction points (also called wells, bore holes, or water sources) during the construction of the pipeline was one of the most frequently noted embodied struggles arising from the structural violence of the pipeline (Figures 21 and 22). Seven families, three in Nanga and four in Kribi, showed me contaminated, destroyed, or unsafe water sources caused by the pipeline (Figures 23 and 24). During construction, groundwater sources or boreholes were destroyed alongside the right-of-way on a large scale; these sources were then either inadequately replaced or were not replaced at all. The destruction and contamination of pre-existing water sources was compounded by an almost unanimously reported ineffective well-replacement procedure, as wells did not comply with technical standards. As such, all of the replacement wells that I was shown are today abandoned. People traced material vulnerabilities—intestinal parasites, amoebiasis, and dysentery—to the contamination of water sources. Shallow, stagnant groundwater is susceptible to bacteriological pollution, which has an immediate and marked impact



Figure 21. Non-functioning well that was built by COTCO as reimbursement when a local borehole was destroyed during pipeline construction, Mpango.

on health. In a discussion with seven women in the village of Bilolo outside Kribi, one woman emphasized,

The first problem is water. It is better to go and *see* where our people bathe and where we drink [rather than sit here and talk]... Before the pipeline, our water [the small stream near the village] circulated very well. We had no problems with skin infections and other sicknesses, [now] even where we wash our bodies, the water is so dirty.

The woman's words echoed the story told by Simon and Daniel several months before, 450 kilometers away near Nanga. As she spoke, her friends nodded their agreement that "the problem with the pipeline is [first and foremost] the problem of [clean] water."

In a study of the socioeconomic consequences of the pipeline in Cameroon's central province, Bertrand Ndjessa Bessala (2002), notes a marked increase in water borne illnesses treated in medical centers along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline corridor, from around 50 in 1998 to over 300 in 2006 and 2007. An ExxonMobil whistleblower, Alan M. Dransfield, who was fired for exposing the project's lack of environmental protections standards, provides insight into the technical aspects of water pollution and contamination caused by the pipeline, he explained,

The [Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline] has not been designed in accordance with International Standards, i.e. Front End Engineering Design (FEED). ExxonMobil designed the project ad hoc as they went. The [pipeline] crosses between 25/26 major rivers and dozens of smaller streams which are the lifeline to local communities and indigenous people. The correct procedure to install pipeline across such rivers and streams is via pipe jacking/tunneling procedures but ExxonMobil took the cheaper alternative [and conducted] open dig [at] all the river crossings, which allowed the unnecessary poisoning of drinking waters. Moreover, the Hydro testing water equaling millions of gallons of contaminated test water was pumped back into the Ecosystem as opposed to [conducting] the correct disposal of contaminated waste via evaporation pits. The open dig methods also deployed thousands of tons of cement mixed with backfill used as erosion control. (Alan M. Dransfield, from an interview with Djamil Ahmat, August 2014)

Inadequate access to safe drinking water in Cameroon is not a reflection of geomorphology, hydrology, or fluvial geomorphology (Mafany et al. 2006). Indeed,

Cameroon has the second highest volume of available water in Africa after the Democratic Republic of Congo, with an estimated at 233 billion cubic meters (m³). Of this, groundwater constitutes 21.5 percent (57 billion m³) and is used for domestic, industrial, and agricultural activities (Mafany et al. 2006: 47). As aquifers and flowing streams are destroyed and polluted, people are increasingly exposed to waterborne illnesses and what Chief Ngali referred to as “the progressive loss of life.” In Mpango, Ndgila André told me,

As soon as they constructed [the replacement wells] they were abandoned—the water is so dirty people only use it to wash clothes... They [COTCO] descend into our villages only when *they* decide and for reasons *they* deem necessary. They never respond directly to our complaints. They never respond directly to us at all. Our two streams [from] before the pipeline were very stocked with fish but because they re-routed the streams, the water became stagnant and now it is wetlands...there are no fish and it is swampy habitat for snakes.

There are six water-bottling plants in the country, extracting groundwater predominately in the volcanic region of western Cameroon (Mafany et al. 2006: 47). However, the cost of bottled water is beyond the quotidian purchasing power of most Cameroonians. Inadequate access to safe drinking water is a form of structural violence, as the prioritization of corporate and state profit result in the destruction and pollution of groundwater, with no recourse.



Figure 22. Looking down into a non-functioning well that was built by COTCO as reimbursement when a local borehole was destroyed during pipeline construction, Mpango.

Experiences of structural violence as historically compounded

In their song, La Fleur (the flower), the Cameroonian musical group, Sumanja, recount,

Il s'ont fini par nous sellam
Nos enfants sont tous les buyams
Nos enfants n'ont plus du get-em
Notre espoir c'est Zion
We di cry
Mama cry

In the end, they sold us
Our children are all consumers
Our children have no more money (get-'em)
Our hope is in Zion [slang for marijuana, Zion also references transnational dispossession and resistance by drawing upon Rastafarianism]
We cry
Mama, cry

The parole of the song illustrates some of the grief felt by what people perceive to be the wholesaling of people and resources that describes contemporary Cameroon. In Kribi and Nanga, people told me, “ils nous ont vendu” (they sold us) and “nous sommes toujours les esclaves” (we are still slaves), to explain the “selling out” of national and regional officials to the interests of the pipeline consortium at the expense of people. In this sense, Cameroon has been “bought” and “sold” and children are now hustled into the marketplace, where they are forced to sell everything but have little means (or, little get-em) for survival. This contemporary setting is historically compounded.

“Discovered” by Portuguese explorers in 1472, the social and economic fabric of Cameroon was devastated by the theft of several million people over 430 years, as diverse societies were forcibly incorporated into the transatlantic slave trade by way of the Bight of Biafra. The geography of what is today Cameroon—the country’s name is adapted from the label given by Portuguese explorers as Rio dos Camerões,

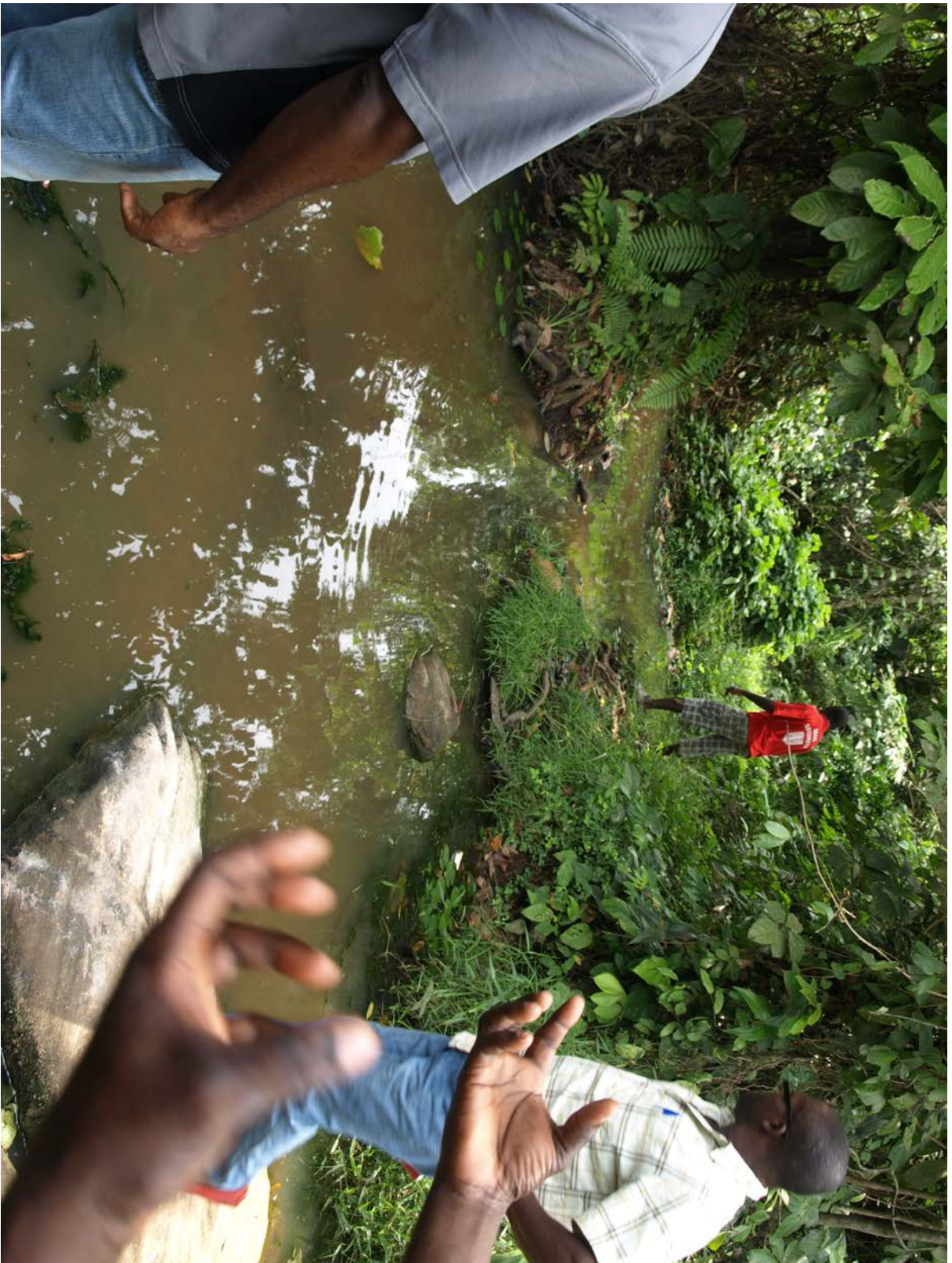


Figure 23. Water source that was once moving is now stagnant after the pipeline's construction, Mpango.

or the river of shrimp in reference to the large prawns of the Wouri estuary—was annexed by Germany in 1884 at the Berlin Conference, a series of meetings between Western European powers to carve up most of the continent for formal colonization in what is known as the “Scramble for Africa.”



Figure 24. Water sources that were once moving are now stagnant after the pipeline’s construction, near Bikolo.

During the colonial period, from 1884 to 1960, the diverse peoples and places of Cameroon underwent—often by force—interrelated and simultaneous spatial, religious, linguistic, agricultural, political, and economic transformations. The capture of people for the slave trade was abolished in 1902 although forced labor continued throughout the colonial period under the auspices of *corvée* or consigned labor. Colonial domination was enforced “locally” through the implementation of hierarchical ‘chefferies’ (or chieftaincies that subdivided places and people), which

facilitated labor exploitation by incentivizing indigenous leaders, handpicked by the colonizers, to provide laborers and to suppress all anti-colonial movements (Guyer 1987: 119). This spatial and political partitioning involved the imposition of male chiefs to oversee diverse communities, many of which were previously nonhierarchical and which engaged in systems of gender complementarity (as opposed to European patriarchy); as was the case for the headmen in the communities around what is now Nanga, so named for a pre-colonial political outcast of the area, Nanga Eboko of the Yekaba, who agreed to work with the German lieutenant Dominik to suppress violently the anti-colonial uprisings by the Maka farther east (Owona 1973; Monteillet 2001; Figure 25).

In Kribi, the colonial period was marked with the passage of Portuguese and Dutch slave traders (1470-1880s), German colonizers (1884-1914), and French colonizers (1914-1960) and, like Nanga, the city's name reveals the discursive dominance assumed by European explorers: "Kikiribi" (a fantastical or mystical person) is thought to have been used by the Portuguese to describe the Baka, Bagyeli, and Bakola forest people of the region's coastal rainforests. In 1914, the Batanga people rose up against German colonizers, who responded by massacring hundreds of people and exiling the remainder of the Batanga to South West Cameroon, several hundred kilometers away, near Mount Cameroon. After the German defeat in WWI, a bloody two-year war was fought between the Germans, British, and French in Cameroon and the German colonizers were forced to retreat to the island of Fernando Pó in 1916.¹⁰ The Batanga community returned to Kribi in two voyages after Germany's withdrawal and the return is celebrated annually by community-wide celebrations.

¹⁰ Again, the reverberations of colonialism's discursive violence: Fernando Pó was named after the Portuguese explorer, Fernão do Pó; the island was later renamed Bioko.

Cameroon's formal independence in 1960 was not tantamount to autonomous independence—as was the case for most post-colonial African states (Mamdani 1996)—in that full political and economic sovereignty was not achieved. Indeed, at independence the Cameroonian colonial state altered little. Claude Ake (1996: 6) explains that in the African post-colony, “state power remained essentially the same [that is to say] immense, arbitrary, often violent, always threatening.” Former colonies continued as the economic “*pré carré*” (backyard) or the “*chasse gardée*” (private hunting preserve) of corporate France as French-installed post-colonial leaders—such as Cameroon's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1924 - 1989), and first prime minister, Paul Biya (1975 – 1982), both of whom were selected by departing French colonists—collaborated with French corporations and businessmen-politicians for “the ultimate purpose of exploiting Africans and African wealth” (Le Vine 2004: 4). Cameroon is one of the few countries in the world where the current head of state has a direct lineage to the former colonial powers.¹¹ Today, structural violence is engaged on the ground through a popular imaginary rooted in the historical experiences of racism, slavery, and colonization, so that the dispossessions of this pipeline are characterized as “*exactement comme*” (just like) earlier dispossessions.

This imaginary is founded on shared historic memories of injustice, where these previous experiences provide the foundations for an articulation against the pipeline's particular dispossessions. People spoke about discrete and intersecting forms of violence—including racism (“it's because we're black”), ethnocentrism (“it's because we're Baka”), enslavement (“they treat us like animals”), and colonialism (“we're still not free—who are we to say no?”)—unifying past moments with present moments

¹¹ President Ahidjo was hand-selected at independence as a leader who would be malleable to the interests of the French business class; he selected as his Prime Minister, Paul Biya, who succeeded him upon his withdrawal from power in 1989. Biya remained president at the time this paper was written in 2014.

and concurrent projects of dispossession across multiple scales. These characterizations indicate that people have nuanced perceptions of their position within a historical ontological order; specifically the ontological ordering that was the rationalization for slavery and colonialism. Through these narratives, people offer self-aware and historically sensitive orderings of themselves, their neighbors, and their communities at the bottom of what was widely described by people in the villages around Nanga and Kribi as an unfair system.

At the same time, several conversations revealed the expectations of future environmental disaster. Monsieur Tené, whose agricultural field sits atop the pipeline and whose home is less than one minute's walk from the right-of-way, told me that the pipe "vibrates" and sometimes "makes a loud grumbling noise during the night." So much so that it disrupted their sleep at first.

In the beginning, he and his family were frightened and thought something might happen. He sought out COTCO representatives with his worry and was told that the crude must be heated or else it will not flow easily down the pipe. Dissatisfied with the answer, he felt he had little choice and "progressively" they adjusted to the noises, although he spoke of the risk of living along the pipeline. He described the danger of something happening, particularly of the pipe burning or bursting (the most commonly heard fear among people in both towns) and his sense that his children would suffer the most from such a catastrophe.

Women in the villages around Kribi likewise reported that they joined together to discuss and decided collectively not to risk death, injury, or malchance by planting along the pipeline; instead, they have abandoned their pre-pipeline plots and negotiated land elsewhere, often bearing physical and economic burdens for the choice (including increased walking distance to the plot and the cost of clearing



Figure 25. Statue of Nanga Eboko in Nanga town's central carrefour.

unfarmed forest). In the village of Bisiong near Kribi, for example, a respected village elder, Mikoum told me, “We women have decided that we no longer grow next to the pipe.” Mikoum had closely cropped white hair, her feet were bare and I noticed scarlet red nail polish on her toenails. As we sat outside her home, Mikoum’s elder sister laughed occasionally at her bold statements. Mikoum continued,

...and we are afraid that when we burn the fields after harvest that it can create dangerous problems above the pipeline... Women do not even cultivate next to it—we think the fire will spread to the pipe and they will say that the old woman with white hair did it and they will put me in prison!

Mikoum’s sister laughed loudly; Mikoum continued her story,

We have no [good] memories [of the pipeline]... only this breakable material [she indicated the broken plastic chair upon which I was precariously seated, which had been re-attached in several spots by rusting wire]. Ils nous ont escroqué [They scammed us].

Mikoum’s sister was entertained by Mikoum’s enthusiastic retelling, but despite the humor and Mikoum’s storytelling ability, people emphasized fear of environmental disaster along the pipeline. Due to the decline in production along the right-of-way and the fear of a pipe explosion, I was only able to locate one woman, Monsieur Tené’s wife in Mbong-Sol near Nanga, who continues to plant near the pipeline easement. She continues to farm here because their home is so near the pipeline easement (recall they can hear the oil pumping from their beds at night) that, in the event of a pipeline explosion, the more immediate concern is the location of their home. Monsieur Tené and his family lack the financial means to relocate their family compound (which consists of three separate one-room buildings, an outdoor cooking area, and a roofed stall for sitting outside) farther from the pipeline, despite their consciousness of the risks of life alongside it.

A focus on people’s experiences of structural violence illustrates the larger

nexus of coloniality (Escobar 2004; Mignolo 2000, 2011) within which the particular violence(s) of the pipeline occur, including how they are compounded and exacerbated over time. These pervasive projects effect dispossessions that harken back to the colonial period, creating elaborate international structures of violence that influence social organization, gender relations, and everyday life. People's accounts reveal that popular imaginations connect contemporary dispossessions of structural violence to earlier forms, as is illustrated in Simon's assertion, "We find ourselves in the olden days, with all the ancient miseries." Contemporary manifestations of structural violence are bound up within neoliberal globalization and its attendant institutions, norms of power, socio-politics, and ideologies, each of which guide labor relations, production, resource distribution, and the processes of accumulation. This perspective highlights the ways in which the violence during the colonial period has been revised—and even augmented—by the violence of the post-colonial present.

Spatially compounded: Mutually constituting and embedded structural violence(s)

The people I spoke with in Nanga and Kribi struggled to focus exclusively or even primarily on the pipeline, as concurrent infrastructural projects impact families and communities. In Kribi, for example, a group of people urged me to research the Kribi Deep Sea Port Project, which, they explained as they drew connections between the port and the pipeline, also failed to provide long-term or skilled employment for local people. In Nanga, people told me about instances of foreigners trekking through hard-to-access rain-forests with "strange machines," reappearing days later to offer exchanges of dried fish and rice for the land's timber; they speculated that the coveted resource lay under the timber. Two men criticized the industrial sugarcane plantations of SOSUCAM (*Societe Sucriere du Cameroun*, a subsidiary of the French food giant,

SOMDIAA) for pumping waste and pesticides into streams near Nkoteng. They urged me to document the pollution of surface water. A Nanga woman whose crops were destroyed by the pipeline later had portions of her land appropriated for the construction of the Yaoundé-Bertoua Autoroute, contracted to the China Water and Electricity Corporation (CWE). During our conversation, she showed me her preciously guarded official documents from both projects.

Elie, in Mpango near Kribi, said, “Today it is not a problem of COTCO or the pipeline. The problem is bigger than COTCO and we must speak between ourselves as villagers to find solutions because we will find none at their door.” These narratives indicate that the pipeline is *one* violent project within a complicated matrix of structurally violent capitalist projects that affect everyday life in and around Nanga and Kribi as a multitude of corporate and political interests convene and intervene in “local” spaces, centering on the economic impetus for raw materials. One consequence of the convergence of multiple deforestation and landscape transforming infrastructural projects is the change in weather patterns, particularly in the last decade. Coastal erosion, pesticide pollution, industrial waste oil spills, deforestation, and desertification threaten Cameroon’s mega-biodiversity and contribute to the unpredictable weather patterns identified by Maman Medgongo.

Like several of her neighbors, Maman Medgongo attributed the unusual climate patterns over the past ten years to the presence of the oil pipeline and the deforestation that accompanied it. She characterized farming as “playing chess” with the rain and the sun: “I mostly lose,” she said. People in both Nanga and Kribi emphasized the disruption of the seasonal calendar by climate change. Cameroon’s rainy season, which usually starts in June, arrives earlier and earlier, sometimes as early as February. The deforestation brought about by the pipeline occurred within a larger

context of deforestation in Cameroon. This was made apparent during my conversation with Jacques, the chief of Nginda (near Nanga).

He was burning big brush piles when I arrived, adeptly positioning his cigarette at the corner of his mouth while he spoke and shook my hand simultaneously. He asked if I knew where the pipeline passed nearby and I admitted to him that I couldn't see it although I knew I had to be standing practically on top of it. Jacques explained that the brush and vegetation is cut periodically along the pipeline right-of-way, approximately every three months (although there is never any indication when it will happen). During my time in Nanga, it had been over six months since the foliage had been cleared and, as a result, it was difficult to ascertain the pipe's exact location. For the people who lived along it, of course, there was no difficulty.

"We don't know why they've let it go so long," Jacques told me as we walked from his home to the road to where he could show me the pipe. Jacques was an energetic and lithe man in his late forties. On that day he was wearing jeans, a T-shirt and white tennis shoes. As we walked up the road in front of his house, I had to almost jog to keep up with him. He spoke quickly and confidently without prompts, recalling exact dates, places, and names. He stopped me near a section of the road, indicating a moist section of ground where the pipeline passed underfoot. As we spoke, a logging straight truck barreled down on us and we raced to the side of the road. Trucks carrying the massive logs of old-growth rain forest pass through Nanga every day, en route to the industrial sawmills of Douala, where logs are prepared for export. Chief Jacques scoffs at "les gens dans le bois" (the people "in" wood), calling them the "Mafia" of Cameroon. A systematic exploitation of wood in the eastern part of Cameroon in which, the chief says, "everyone is complicit." Nina, likewise, later told me a story of a man who came to their familial plot to cut down some wood;

meanwhile, he stole several bushels of plantains, which he hid in his truck. I heard many similar stories.

The leaves of the trees along the roadside were red-tinted, covered with dust from the nearly constant truck traffic, transporting this raw lumber—mahogany, ebony, and teak—from the dense equatorial rainforest of the Congo Basin to Douala’s port. With 24 million hectares of rainforest, Cameroon is the fourth most ecologically diverse African country. Cameroon’s National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) identifies 805 fish species, 8,000 tree species, 409 mammal species, 183 reptile species, and 849 bird species. The exploitation of this biodiversity fits into the long history of structural violence in Cameroon, a history which people on the ground are acutely aware of. Commercial logging began during the colonial period in the 1880s and expanded in the 1920s (Topa et al. 2009: 13). Cameroon remains one of Africa’s largest producers of timber and from the 1980s to mid-1990s; it was the world’s fourth largest timber exporting country (Ichikawa 2006; Ngalame 2013). Since the 1980s, timber has accounted for approximately 25 percent of Cameroon’s foreign exchange, second only to petroleum and far exceeding any other agricultural commodity (Topa et al. 2009: 13).

Cameroon’s forests are disappearing at an annual rate of close to one percent. Between 1990 and 2010, 4.5 million hectares (approximately 45,000 square kilometers) of forest cover was destroyed (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation). In 1994, the government introduced a number of forest policy reforms, placing 30 percent of the surface area under production. However, Global Witness recently released a report exposing a system of “shadow permits,” highlighting the allocation permits for small business and artisans to industrial logging companies (Mwanamilongo 2013). Greenpeace International has likewise documented instances

in which illegal timber was labeled as legal and exported with false documentation, including a report of illegal logging near the site of the Memvé'élé Dam project, construction for which is contracted to the Chinese company, Sinohydro. Greenpeace recently reported on illegal logging by Uniprovince—a subsidiary of SGSO Cameroon Holding Ltd., which is registered in the Cayman Islands—where 2,500 hectares of land were razed, to make way for the American-owned Herakles Farm palm oil plantation. The report, titled “License to Launder,” indicates that Cameroon’s Minister of Forests was aware of the allocation of the unlawful logging permit that allowed the clear-cutting to occur (Greenpeace International 2014).

The convoluted power nexus that creates the groundwork for structural violence in Cameroon is tangible in such moments. Deforestation, oil spills, soil erosion, and groundwater contamination are forms of structural violence affected by the pipeline. If we evaluate each of these violence(s) in turn or in isolation, we lose sight of their overlapping and intersecting configurations in lifescapes and landscapes; we also perform a decontextualization that is complicit with the perpetuation of structural violence.

Final thoughts

What Chief Ngali described as the progressive loss of life fits into the body of critical scholarship on how particular populations are made “redundant,” “superfluous,” or “disposable” by the patterns of uneven development entrenched in the practices of modernity (Agamben 1998; Mbembe 2003; Bauman 2013). Some of these theoretical projects implicitly overlook the role of human agency. Even as patterns of global political economic exchange force people to the margins, peripheries, and dead-lands, people struggle, laugh, mourn, feel, resist, acquiesce, and

act in complex ways. Moreover, there is often—as reflected in Ngali’s commentary on the “enforced waiting for death”—an astute consciousness of self, place, and community within this nexus of structural violence, defying any easy characterization of people as “disposable.” In Kribi, a group of men explained the risks of living alongside the oil pipeline in transnational ways. They referenced the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and ecological destruction in the oil exploitation of Ogoniland in the Niger Delta. Describing groups of people as “superfluous,” “wasted,” and/or “redundant”—even in a deeply critical analysis of the processes that convene to make this so—risks solidifying and finalizing abandonment/disposability as such. Turning to a framework of structural violence that centers on people’s narratives, opens up other possibilities—most particularly an engagement with agency and people’s understandings of their placement in a *longue durée* of structural violence.

A body of scholarship on structural violence posits such violence as *invisible* and, therefore, any project to combat it begins with the unveiling of such violence. This begs the question: Structural violence is invisible to whom? For the people who live amidst structurally violence forces, this violence is hyper-visible, despite discursive attempts to cloak, bury, and efface by those in power. Dignity, shame, pain, and pride inform resistance and response to structural violence as much as—or more than—the visibility or invisibility of “the perpetrators.” In a context of increasingly porous power structures and as violence is embedded within racialized hierarchies, multilayered, and multispatialized global transactions, the actors and actions of structural violence do not need to be made “visible” to those who live within structurally violent nexuses. Recognizing this fundamentally alters the scholar-activist project of defining and working against forces of structural violence.

The search for greater visibility and even greater visibility—including those of transparency initiatives, full disclosure, and liberal principles that are now embedded within a transnational corporate responsibility discourse—is a cognitive snare, restricting the realm of possible solutions to corporate volunteerism and excluding narratives of loss outside a quantifiable, calculable ordering of the world according to the dogma of scientism (recall, for example, Pierre’s nuanced awareness of the flaws of “proof,” which limit the power of his testimony without a scientific examination of changes in soil temperature along the pipeline route). To “see” something is to encounter it in a particular field of visibility, but fields of vision are created through political, cultural, and scientific processes and these processes determine what subjects and objects are understandable, important, and valid—and therefore visible. Euro-American audiences are spatially disciplined to not “see” the suffering caused by the particular spatial privileges of living in Euro-American regions (what can be described as willful blindness). This spatial conditioning is fundamental to the perpetuation of a globalized financial-political-policy regime (Peet 2003: 14-23) that perpetuates historically rooted, spatial practices of structural violence.

Cultivating spaces of peace—not just the absence of direct war as in the dominant Western liberal concept of peace, but a nonviolent peace founded upon local notions and practices of wellbeing (Daley 2014: 66-7)—entails long-term collaborative work to dismantle structures of exclusion by doing intellectual and creative work that emphasizes the vocabularies and languages that dispossessed people use to stake claims in structurally violent contexts. The theory of structural violence has its origins in peace studies and as such there is an active component imbedded within the theoretical work on structural violence: it is an incitement against the complex sociopolitical processes and colonial discourses that produce

historically rooted, spatially compounded, and acutely visible violence of displacement in-place experienced through hunger, thirst, and the “death of the earth” (Lefebvre 1976; Blaikie 1985). By asserting and foregrounding the violence(s) of these processes, we demystify the colonial monopoly on the discourse of violence, which would cast entire populations as either perpetual threats to or superfluous in the colonial global order. Work on structural violence has almost unanimously involved the foregrounding of the need to build resolve against and work towards the unbinding of ourselves from such systems. An immediate step in this direction would entail the decommissioning of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline alongside a sustained debt relief program, which would, critically, open up space for an unprecedented level of self-determination, as opposed to the current system where regulations and policies are determined by external bodies through debt restructuring schemes.

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Article III
Engaging Invisible Power and Visible Dispossession
through Epistemologies of *La Sorcellerie*
Along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline¹

Abstract

In this article I draw from epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* (witchcraft) in two towns along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline as a means of illustrating the importance of analyses of unseen networks of power in political geography. There has been a lack of attention to the role of the invisible or the unseen in geographic work on power, place and resistance, despite the importance of understanding the ways in which the unseen informs people's conceptions of power, wealth, violence and the possible in particular ways. Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* provide frameworks for understanding and critiquing the invisible or the unseen actors and processes that bring about uneven distributions of wealth and risk along the oil pipeline. However, the practices of *la sorcellerie* positions actors of violence at a distance from the agency of people in the community, limiting the building of a collective action-making of *la sorcellerie* with the potential to transform and resist. So that while epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* provide a language of cultural resistance that conceptualises and critiques these large-scale dispossessions, in practice, *la sorcellerie* relegates resistance-action to the level of the family, in some cases accelerating the rupturing of the community begun by the pipeline's violence. I end with reflections on the call for transparency and visibility in policy and scholarly debates around 'slow' or 'structural' forms of violence.²

Keywords: Cameroon; oil pipeline; power; structural violence; witchcraft; politics of invisible

Introduction

Looking at epistemologies (or how people know and name the world) of *la sorcellerie* or witchcraft is instructive in highlighting the ways in which invisible forms of power are recognized, addressed and responded to by Cameroonians, as I explain in this piece on epistemologies along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline in Kribi and Nanga-

¹ Article forthcoming at *Political Geography*.

² This research was funded by the University of Oxford Clarendon Fund. I am also thankful to the African and African Diaspora Studies Program at Boston College for funding my final write-up year. Thanks to Dali Islam, Patricia Daley, Derogy Ndewa, Ian Klinke and Chambi Chachange, whose close readings yielded much needed critiques, insights and suggestions for improvement on earlier drafts of this paper. Yvonne Aburrow patiently guided me through the history of Western European 'witchcraft' and anti-witchcraft movements, including a synopsis of present-day paganism. The feedback from members of the *Transformations Cluster* in the School of Geography and the Environment at Oxford was much appreciated. All errors are, of course, my own.

Eboko (hereinafter Nanga, as it is referred to by the people who live here). In Cameroonian epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*, malevolent actors and their acts are hidden from view at the same time that they are understood, sensed and known in the visible world through their material consequences. Visible and invisible forces, energies and agents are inseparable to one's being in the world. The vaporous qualities of the material of the pipeline (which is buried 1.5 metres underground), the partial presence of pipeline actors, the enigmatic processes of construction and the arrival of pipeline installations that are at once massive in their physical presence on the landscape and unreadable in their processes of becoming, lead to various interpretations by people in Nanga and Kribi, including direct and indirect accusations of witchcraft or *la sorcellerie* by community members to Cameroon Oil Transportation Company (COTCO) employees. When pressed to explain or trace the processes of crop destruction or actors involved, the language of *la sorcellerie* was sometimes employed to refer to shadowy figures or forces with 'bad hearts' or no care for human wellbeing. Pipeline processes were described as or likened to acts of poisoning, a favoured mechanism of destruction used by *les sorciers*.³

The construction of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was subcontracted to France's Spie-Capag group and the United States' Fluor and Willbros between 2000 and 2003. People in Nanga and Kribi describe pipeline work crews arriving on their land with little or no notice. They recall that bulldozers first destroyed crops and then labour crews arrived to lay the pipe. There was little sense among people who or what

³ The terms *witchcraft*, the *occult*, *magic*, *sorcery* and *enchantment* are used to refer to a wide range of activities and beliefs. Each of these terms is rooted in western European early modern period (16th - 17th Centuries) belief systems and as such, effect a discursive violence when applied to African contexts. The term *witchcraft* in the Christian Eurocentric imagination holds non-theistic, polytheistic, animist and/or ancestor-centric cosmologies as evil and/or primitive (Hutton, 1999). While the terms have European origins, Cameroonian *la sorcellerie* did not come into being through colonial encounters.

had taken control of the place. As quickly as the construction crews arrived, they were gone again, with the construction process generally lasting approximately two weeks in each village (although places where labour camps were erected like Nanga and Kribi experienced longer integration and construction periods, often of several months, as well as being locations of permanent installations), leaving a barren terminal in the otherwise forested landscape of the equatorial Congo Basin, which stretches as far as the eye can see in both directions. The construction period brought with it a temporary economic boom in the rural and semi-rural towns along its route (urban areas were consciously avoided by project planners to reduce the project's impact and, probably, its visibility).

The destruction of much of the physical proof of the pipeline rendered the pipeline invisible to those who had not experienced it first-hand. Indeed during my first week in Nanga, I struggled to locate the pipeline and finding local maps tracing its route was next to impossible. On the consortium maps, the pipeline runs straight across territories that appear as voids; only a handful of villages are named in the pure, flat topographical space. Andrew Barry (2009: 69) employs the concept of 'visible invisibility' to capture the over-abundance of documents surrounding the otherwise 'unseen' underground Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, designed as it was to be 'safe, secure, unseen'. The uneven dispossessions effected by oil pipelines in these landscapes—where discursive and infrastructural erasures unite through processes that are similarly visibly invisible—are enacted through large-scale, complex bureaucratic structures characterised by concentrations of private and political power that delegitimise the invisible spaces where the maximisation of profit shapes policy negotiations (see Thorne & Kouzmin's 2013 analysis of the 'mutual interplay between visibility and invisibility' in the operations of power and

hegemony).

Reimbursement and compensation funds combined with the salaries of male migrant labourers flooded rural areas, which were previously dominated by subsistence agriculture, with cash. In this temporary boom, the cost of food staples increased significantly. The juxtaposition of the influx of wealth—particularly the ostentatious wealth of the foreign and migrant labourers—with the lived poverty of the majority of those along the pipeline inspired jealousy, anger and suspicion. This widespread distrust contributed to speculation and *kongossa* (rumour) around *la sorcellerie*.

It was suspected that politicians and government officials benefited from keeping people in the dark about the project. These apprehensions fit the pipeline within a larger narrative in which politicians are sometimes accused of evildoing and sorcery, including stories of politicians feeding off the energies of political opponents or sexual partners.⁴ President Paul Biya, infamously a member of the Rosicrucian Order (a secret society), it has been rumoured, came to power through a secret occult initiation with the country's first President, Ahmadou Ahidjo. While he has named himself '*l'homme lion*' (the lion-man) as an indication of his status as the 'king of the jungle', political opponents liken Biya to a snake in the grass because of his propensity to stay out of the national and international limelight, rarely appear in

⁴ These rumours are reinforced by instances of mass killings and kidnappings, presumably for trade on the black market. While I was in Yaoundé in November and December 2012, the city was in distress from the ritual killings of a dozen young women, who, post-mortem, had their brains, eyes, genitals and other body parts removed. The number of killed reached 18. These young women, ages 15 to 26, were often kidnapped whilst returning home in the evening hours, they were taken from the poorest quarters, *Mimboman* and *Biteng*, on the outskirts of the city. Nearly everyone I spoke with understood these murders to be ritual human sacrifices linked intimately with contemporary forms of *la sorcellerie*, with the symbolic removal of particular body parts which are believed to bring the consumer power, wealth, health or good fortune.

public and consistently avoid interviews (Emvana, 2005).⁵ Michel Roger Emvana (2005: 27) describes his rule as, '*le biyaïsme*': a complex, undulating and mythical ('*mythique*') power of '*l'apathie, à l'absentéisme, à la fainéantise*' (apathy, absenteeism and inaction). Popular idioms connect widespread political corruption with forms of *la sorcellerie*; for example, the notion that a political post is '*une mangeoire*'—as in, '*il est dans une mangeoire qui n'as pas de nom*'—or an opportunity to eat, feed or consume indefinitely, in the same way *les sorciers/sorcières* (witches) feed from the souls and labours of their victims.⁶ Shortly after the pipeline began pumping oil, a local newspaper, *Le Messenger*, reported that between November 1982 and September 2011, approximately 2,000 million CFA Francs (4,138,000\$US) had been misappropriated by high-ranking government officials and transferred to personal bank accounts in Switzerland, France, the United States and West Indies (Takougang, 2004: 111; see also Mentan, 2003: 112). The resulting suspicion of this underbelly of wealth creation was evident in people's characterisations of COTCO and government officials in relation to the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline.

Although there have been calls for greater and more nuanced understandings of the role of 'local knowledges' and 'local perspectives' within development geographies (Agarawal, 1995; Routledge, 1996; Briggs and Sharp, 2004), witchcraft, sorcery and the

⁵ Biya is also sometimes called '*le sphinx d'Etoudi*' in reference to his immovable power at *Le Palais d'Etoudi* in Yaoundé.

⁶ Another reference to the consumption of politicians is the Cameroonian expression, '*la chèvre broute là où elle est attachée*' (the goat eats where you put it) as in reference to a minister who 'eats' (profits through networking or embezzling money from government projects) within his ministry.



Figure 26. Recently cleared pipeline corridor, the communications tower of the Pump Reduction Station is visible in the background, outside Kribi.

occult have remained almost completely unexplored, with the examination of mining

and magic in Tanzania by Bryceson *et al.* (2014) a noted exception. The important role of such knowledges, discourses and epistemologies in shaping meanings, interpretations and constructions of space, power and violence on the African continent and elsewhere make this a ripe area of study for geographers.⁷ Indeed, witchcraft epistemologies along the oil pipeline in Cameroon are critical to contestations of power and resistance in uneven geographies of poverty. While Doreen Massey (1999: 18) writes that places are ‘embedded in complex, layered histories’, political geographers have yet to systematically consider non-Euro-American epistemologies in the complex spatial relationships and histories made and unmade through the uneven distribution of power and wealth that are often built-into ‘development’ processes; this gap in the literature is particularly acute in Central and West Africa. The recent intervention from Garth Andrew Myers (2014: 125) identifies on-going omissions in the subfield of political geography as a whole where Africa is concerned, arguing that ‘geography has a geography to it’. Political geography has a geographic orientation in which ‘African topics are still marginal’ (Myers, 2014: 125).⁸ This article contributes to the on-going project of opening geography to non-Euro-American epistemological orderings of place and power.

Such a political geography necessarily attends to the visible and the invisible, without privileging the visible. The intentions of this study are not to point out what

⁷ A wide scholarship reveals that witchcraft epistemologies have played significant historical and contemporary roles in informing the ways that diverse peoples across Africa, the Caribbean and Asia situate themselves amidst changing social and economic conditions (Schmoll, 1993; Ashforth 1996; Geshiere, 1997; Shaw, 1997; Eves, 2000; Fisiy & Geshiere, 2001; Rajah, 2005; Ekholm Friedman 2011).

⁸ As Meyers (2014: 125-126) explains, ‘Over the last decade (2003-2012), less than 6% of research articles in [*Political Geography*] and about 3% in [*Geopolitics*] (for a combined total of 49 articles) had a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa’ and that, moreover, ‘just shy of one-fourth of the 49 *Political Geography* and *Geopolitics* Africa articles from 2003-2012 were South Africa focused, and six more covered southern Africa [while] some 80% of the Africa-related books reviewed in these journals were on South Africa’.

actor(s) or structure(s) are not apparent to a non-scholar community but how people in place understand features of reality, place and politics. To put it another way, my discussion of the epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* does not propose that the larger structural processes and actors of the pipeline's socio-political infrastructure are unknowable to people in Nanga and Kribi but, rather, that they are knowable in their invisibility in particular ways. Importantly, the way(s) that power and empowerment are conceived of informs people's responses and shapes attempts to assert their own power in geographies of poverty, such as those along the pipeline, where power is (systemically) unevenly distributed. Looking in this direction also reveals on-going appropriations of 'local knowledge' within institutionalized top-down 'development' projects like the pipeline. The oil consortium, for example, sponsored animal sacrifices along the pipeline corridor during the construction period when sacred areas were destroyed; indeed, so many animal sacrifices were conducted that the anthropologist hired by the Bank to oversee community outreach in southern Chad, Ellen Brown, was named 'Madame Sacrifice' (Smith 2010).⁹ These appropriations pacify a measure of the public outrage over the destructive and dispossessing components of 'development' projects by providing a veneer of 'authenticity' to the otherwise unaltered institutional frameworks.

Engaging with epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* illustrates the complexity of understandings, negotiations and contestations of power and resistance across various scales. These epistemologies are heterogeneous and, as I explore below, *la sorcellerie* can also be employed by non-believers or sceptics to expose an illegitimate wealth generation through trickery. I look at some of the ways that people draw upon popular frameworks of *la sorcellerie* to make sense of the experiences of land dispossession

⁹ This is one example of corporations and the Bank using 'IK' nefariously, as mentioned in *Article I*.

and ecological destruction brought about by the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. Cameroonian epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* are entangled within and have been transformed by colonial violence, the transatlantic slave trade and post/neocolonial dispossessions in Cameroon, acting as a framework for understanding various forms of structural violence throughout history. However, while they provide a frame of cultural resistance that conceptualizes and critiques large-scale dispossessions, witchcraft practices relegate resistance actions to the scale of the family, in some cases accelerating the rupturing of the community begun by the pipeline project.

The political infrastructure of the pipeline¹⁰

Those familiar with the large body of literature on oil exploitation and the ‘resource curse’ will no doubt wonder why I chose not to employ Michael Watts’ (1996, 2001) conceptualisation of ‘petro-violence’ in a study of dispossession, power and resistance along an oil pipeline. Petro-violence, according to Watts, is characterised by ecological violence, social deprivation, criminality and violent resistance in a context of political corruption, rent-seeking and state violence with multinational support (see also Obi, 1997; Okonta, 2003; Le Billon, 2004). Petro-violence manifests in physical violence, often armed conflict, and is highly visible. In the case of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, I turn away from the conceptualisation of a petro-specific violence and draw instead from the literature extrapolating forms of structural violence in neo-liberalised, globalised capitalist extractions. A conception of petro-violence, I find, does not sufficiently capture the sense—given repeatedly in Kribi and Nanga—that this pipeline project is one extraction project among many which has effected uneven dispossession(s) and an uneven aggravation of poverty along uneven

¹⁰ This succinct outline is intended to give a broad sense of the history, emplacement and culture of the pipeline and the diverse epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*.

and mostly unseen networks of power (Murrey 2015). Moreover, the landscapes of oil pipelines are distinct from the landscapes of oil-producing regions, in this case the Doba Basin of southern Chad. The dispersed nature of an oil pipeline, unlike a spatially confined production and extraction zone, means that hundreds of different villages—in this case, the pipeline passes beneath 238 villages and is within two kilometres of 794 additional villages (Lo, 2010: 155)—are drawn unevenly into the project, in heterogeneous ways depending on their spatial proximity to the pipeline. This spatial diffusion is one factor that has contributed to the lack of unified, collective and organised opposition movements against the pipeline between villages in Cameroon. Instead, I argue, engaging with this oil pipeline through the lens of structural violence illustrates that the pipeline both participates in a context of pre-existing structural violence(s) while perpetuating new forms of social and environmental violence.

At the same time that wealth was unevenly distributed through the project, dispossession and risk were unevenly distributed (to those people living in closest proximity to the pipeline as well as those whose plantations and lands were destroyed during the laying of the pipe). This uneven distribution of dispossession and risk alongside an inversely uneven distribution of wealth and profits fits the pipeline project within the body of academic literature on forms of structural violence. For some people in Nanga and Kribi, epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* lay bare this uneven socio-political infrastructure.

For this project, I lived in Kribi on Cameroon's Southern coastline and Nanga in the central region. Nanga and Kribi are tied together by proximity to an oil pipeline, experiences of living in spaces of boom-and-bust and processes of dispossession and displacement in place. A decolonial framework challenges the foundations of

capitalism as deeply violent and destructive (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Escobar, 2004). Elsewhere I offer a decolonial articulation of structural violence that is centred upon people's experiences and perspectives, emphasising that such violence(s) is 'hyper-visible' in the realm of the everyday in Nanga and Kribi: through embodied and gendered experiences of hunger, illness, and the death of the earth (Murrey 2015). The encroachments and dispossessions of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline are situated within long histories of structural violence, as local epistemologies are being reworked to grasp changing political, territorial and socio-cultural power/knowledge relations.

The Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was one of the most scrutinised oil projects in modern history. At the time, Chad had recently emerged from a 15-year bloody civil war and the Cameroonian state was internationally renowned for its high levels of civil society repression and corruption, having been listed consistently among Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index*, which scores countries on how corrupt their public sector is in relation to other countries. The pipeline—the largest onshore private investment on the African continent (Grovogui & Leonard, 2007)—was the US\$4.1 billion dollar brainchild of a consortium made up of ExxonMobil (the world's third highest grossing corporation), Petroliam Nasional Berhad i.e. Petronas (a Malaysian gas company), Chevron-Texaco (a US oil corporation),¹¹ the governments of Chad and Cameroon, and the World Bank (the world's largest and most powerful development institution). The pipeline is 1,080 kilometres (670 miles) long, originates in Chad's Doba Basin and ends in Cameroon's port city of Kribi.

¹¹ Chevron-Texaco later changed its name to Chevron Corp. and in June 2014 Chevron Corp. sold its 25 per cent stake to the Republic of Chad for 1.3 billion\$US.



Figure 27.
Women
gathered to talk
about their
experiences
with the
pipeline,
Bikolo,
Cameroon.

The World Bank Press Release announcing its approval of the project on 6 June 2000 ambitiously describes the pipeline as ‘an unprecedented frame-work to transform oil wealth into direct benefits for the poor’. The 2004 ExxonMobil Corporate Citizenship Report describes the key for project success to be ‘the creation of a strong partnership with the World Bank, which viewed the project as an opportunity to help promote economic development in Chad’ (38). Through a number of spending requirements imposed on the government of Chad through the project’s financial structuring, the pipeline was crafted to be *the* project that would alter the paradox of the so-called ‘oil curse’, or the propensity for oil exporting economies, paradoxically, to experience decreases in economic growth rates and productivity (Auty, 1993). Despite contentions from the World Bank and the oil consortium that poverty alleviation and development ventures would be coupled with commercial and capitalist interests in a manner beneficial for all parties involved, the pipeline failed to bring development to the towns and villages affected by the project and on 9 September 2008, the World Bank announced that it was unable to continue its support for the project.

With the construction of the pipeline in 2000, existing places, including forests, vegetation, farmlands, ancestral lands and human habitats, were destroyed along a 30 to 50 metre-wide corridor. A material land space as large as the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) was appropriated in Cameroon and south-western Chad for the original 30-year operational period of the pipeline; this period has since been extended, following the announcement in July 2014 that the pipeline will be extended 600 kilometres to access Niger’s Agadem block. The research for this article was conducted ten years after the construction process finished in Nanga and Kribi and four years following the Bank’s withdrawal. Working after-the-fact in this way

captures people's overarching reflections of the project after a decade of interactions and struggles for reimbursement and compensation; these histories capture a frustration that an immediate post-construction analysis—the period during which communities are optimistic and hopeful about development outcomes—might not have done. People engage with the pipeline in hindsight, looking at how the pipeline came into their community and what the long-term effects of this arrival has meant in their lives. Understanding people's narratives post-'development' provides important opportunities to learn from the epistemologies employed to narrate the experiences of development failure.

Literatures on witchcraft, power and violence in Africa

Colonial powers generally considered African cosmologies to be comparable with the stigmatised and gendered European pre-Christian belief systems and engaged with them according to this mind-set (Kuklick, 1991), alternately passing witchcraft suppression acts, outlawing non-Christian and non-Muslim practices and/or prohibiting witchcraft trials in colonial Africa (Geschiere, 1997; West, 2005). Social evolutionists held that non-Western religious cosmologies would disappear with modernisation (Kuklick, 1991) and this perspective is reflected in early anthropological contributions, such as E.B. Tylor's (1871) *Primitive Culture* and Lewis Henry Morgan's (1877) *Ancient Society*. Apprehension of socio-cultural extinction was one reason that early anthropologists so carefully documented indigenous cultural practices and beliefs (Kuklick, 1991). Of course, in neither Africa nor Europe have polytheistic, animist or non-Judeo-Christian religious beliefs

disappeared (Hutton, 1999).¹²

Following the juridical-political decolonisation of the majority of African states in the 1960s, there was a considerable decline in studies of witchcraft and *la sorcellerie* due in part to the association with colonial anthropology but such studies have re-emerged in the past twenty years. These newer studies link the inequalities, anxieties and disillusionments of modern capitalism with the persistence, and sometimes strengthening, of witchcraft practices and witch-hunting in Africa (Schmoll, 1993; Ashforth, 1996; Bongmba, 1998; Geschiere, 1997, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2001; Fisiy & Geschiere, 2001; Moore & Sanders, 2001; Reyna, 2011; Fancello, 2008; Henry & Tall, 2008). The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) echoed this sense in 2009, reporting that UN investigators had tracked ‘tens of thousands’ of cases where people had been beaten, deprived of property or banished from their communities for their suspected involvement in witchcraft on the African continent. Scholars note that the regression of the state under neoliberal capitalism and an unpredictable global economy operating on the whims of financialisation, contribute to shifting practices and languages of sorcery, witchcraft and the occult (Moore & Sanders, 2001). While some anthropologists have focused on the connections between modern capitalist practices and shifting witchcraft practices (Geschiere, 2006; Fisiy & Geschiere, 2001; Renya, 2011), others have traced the links between earlier forms of modernity, among them enslavement and colonialism, and witchcraft (Shaw, 1997).

Considering these literatures side-by-side is evocative in a consideration of structural violence, as it suggests that witchcraft epistemologies have a history of interpreting and interacting with varying forms of violence, hegemony and uneven

¹² Ronald Hutton estimates that there are approximately 120,000 Pagans in the UK (Aburrow, 2005).

access to power throughout history, from pre-colonial contact to juridical-political decolonisation and global coloniality. Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* have been and continue to serve as frameworks for understanding and resisting modes of domination and violence. These epistemologies are not static, and encounters with violence, in varying forms, probably deeply shape(d) their forms and development. Indeed, there seems to be a co-constitutive historical relationship, continuously interpenetrating and coalescing, between witchcraft and the misfortunes, inequalities and mechanisms of ‘coloniality’ (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Escobar, 2004).

Anthropologist Rosalind Shaw (1997), for example, traces the possible roots of the contemporary belief in zombification or soul-eating, when a person’s spirit self is sold, traded or eaten in the invisible realm by a sorcerer. Shaw argues that in Sierra Leone, the trans-Atlantic slave trade might have provoked beliefs in soul-eating and zombification as people were attempting to make sense of the violent disappearing of an unprecedented number of family members and friends; Nicolas Argenti (2007) similarly addresses the links between slavery and witchcraft in the Cameroonian Grasslands. There is a historical coexistence of witchcraft epistemologies and shifting forms of violent domination and dispossession, which have been continuously and simultaneously evolving, since the moment of ‘first contact’ between African peoples and European explorers in the fifteenth century. In Cameroon, this was in 1472 as Portuguese explorers led by Fernão do Pó—a merchant from Lisbon who had been granted a monopoly on trade in the Gulf of Guinea by the Portuguese crown—set up one of the main ‘collection points’ for enslaved peoples who had been captured inland. In cases like Cameroon, the interconnected experiences of slavery, colonisation and global coloniality are palpable within the continuities, fluctuations, revitalisations and revisions epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*.

Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* in Cameroon

In Nanga and Kribi, the invisible forces of violence, evil and malediction permeate everyday life. This can include sudden death, mysterious illness, financial insecurity, nightmare, natural disaster, climate change, failed harvest and poverty, which are often understood as signs of spiritual foul-play or *la sorcellerie*. The forest is conceived of as a mysterious place where spirits abide and witches meet. There are moments in one's life, particularly during sleep, when one becomes susceptible to infiltration by the spirit of a witch. Spiritual attacks might be manifested in reoccurring sexual dreams or nightmares, which steal the body's power. These spirits are not visible to an untrained eye but only to 'seers' or *marabouts*. A shared popular epistemology of witchcraft is 'both self-evident and solemnly real': Francis Nyamjoh (2001) explains that instead of being a belief, witchcraft is an inescapable component of life and one's being in the world. People usually cannot explain why witches target one person and not another, although they know when a person has been targeted (Geshiere, 1997). People can be physically present at the same time that their spirit has left the body to travel or hunt in invisible realms, the latter referring to the night-time hunting of human souls to sacrifice, sell or eat. Invisible realms intersect with the visible world to evoke a modern globalised topography characterised by time-space compression (Kearney, 1995: 549; Shaw, 1997: 857). Time is fluid, with the contemporary moment rooted in a lived past and respect for relationships with ancestors. The ontological pluralism of Cameroonian *la sorcellerie* defies any monolithic designation or delimitation.

There are an estimated 280 ethnic communities and 270 indigenous dialects in Cameroon. This heterogeneity is reflected in the disparities in historical and contemporary epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* across the country's landscape. To

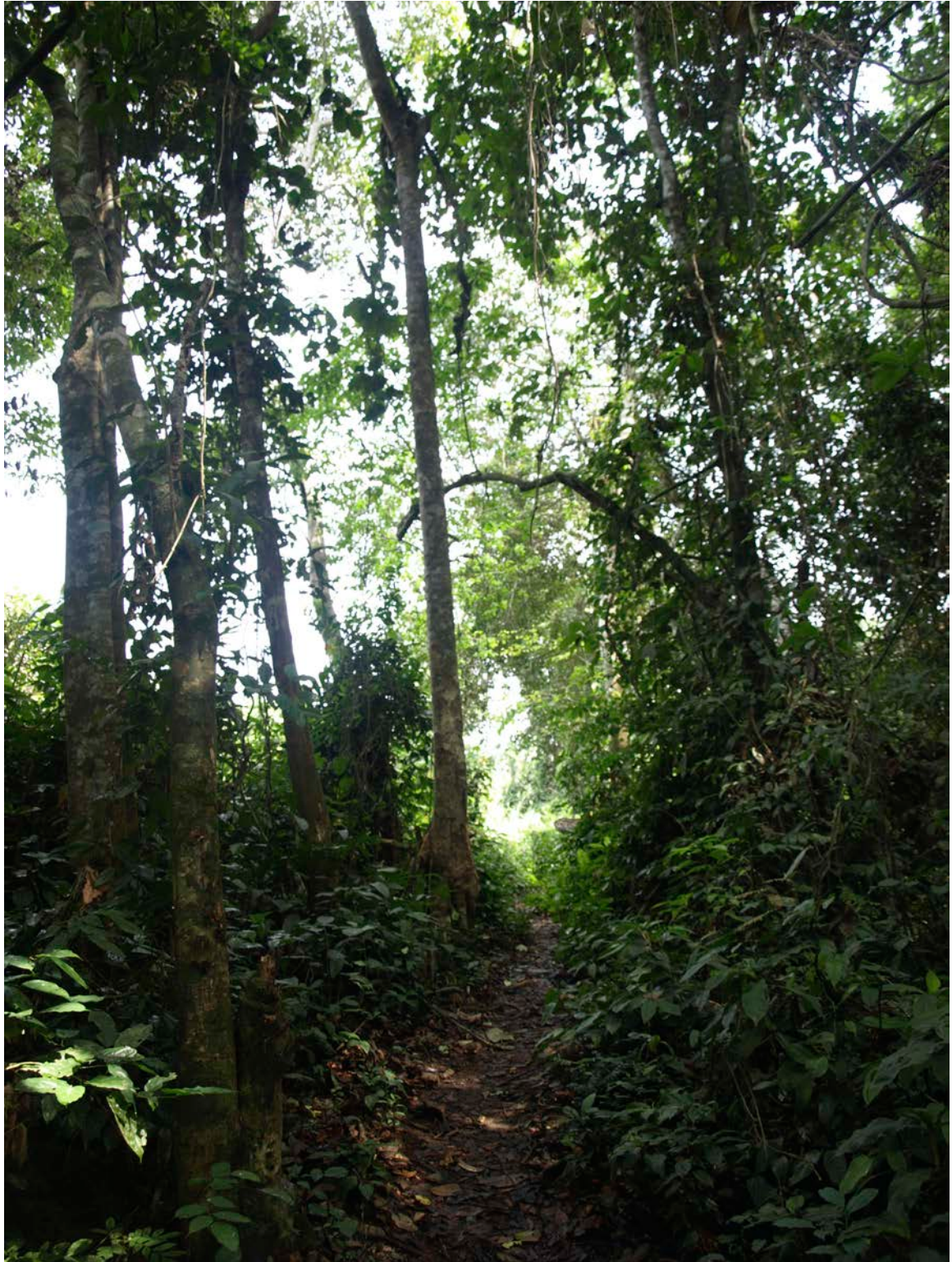


Figure 28. A footpath through the dense southern rainforest (part of Central Africa's Congo Basin) leads to the communal water source, Bikolo.

paint a broad but in no sense comprehensive conceptual understanding of these distinctions, it is useful to consider a popularized triad of *la sorcellerie*, which distinguishes the socio-political places and peoples of the West (broadly, Bamileke or Bamoun peoples), the Center and portions of the East (broadly, Beti peoples) and the North (broadly, Islamic Fulani peoples). In this popularized account, *le famlèt* or *famla* (spelling varies) refers to a Bamileke variety of *sorcellerie* where a person's—usually but not exclusively a family member of the witch—soul is 'sold' for money, but he does not physically die (at least not immediately). This sold, sacrificed or enslaved person might continue to live for all intents and purposes 'normally' during the daytime, but might be 'sent' to work while sleeping. That the person is 'sold' might be revealed in moments of unusual risk-taking or unexplainable fatigue.

Le kong or *le koñ* (spelling varies) is a variety of *sorcellerie* associated with Beti peoples, who are compelled by an internal force known as *l'évu*, which resides in the belly (for men) or the vagina. *Le koñ* entails using *l'évu*'s negative power to sell or offer a person to be completely devoured (*dévore*, *mangé*, eaten). Unlike *le famla*, the motive is understood as either jealousy over the achievements and possessions of the victim or for the eater/seller to obtain or retain power. This power is usually a post of economic and/or political importance. The *envoûtement* (bewitchment or enchantment) manifests through a number of physical symptoms in the victim, including fever, visions, nightmares and ultimately death. The body, or particular parts thereof, is either ritually consumed post-mortem or sent to another realm to 'work' for the sorcerer. Occasionally, people hear of loved ones—*déjà mort et enterrés* (already dead and buried)—being 'seen' in neighbouring countries or other regions of Cameroon; these stories establish that the person was a victim of *le koñ*.

A popular Bikutis song, *Pala Pala Women*, by Cameroonian Mani Bella refers

to the proliferation of *la sorcellerie* in different regions of Cameroon, ending with, ‘*Mais c’est les Nangas qui m’ont fini ! Les Nanga-Ebokos m’ont envoyé ! Je suis perdu... Je suis pala pala !*’ Here she is referring to the propensity of *les sorciers* to send (*envoyer*) their victims to the non-visible world to labour, leaving their bodies empty in the visible world. She is lost (*perdu*) and *pala pala* (finished or ruined), she no longer has control of herself. Mentioning Nanga is a reference to both the distinction between urban/rural, where *le village* is a site and source of *la sorcellerie*, as well as the sense that those villages associated with the Biya regime, such as Nanga (the president’s mother in-law hails from Nanga), are particularly involved in *la sorcellerie* to continue political domination.

Alongside malevolent genres of *la sorcellerie*, is an extensive and equally powerful network of healers, indigenous medical practitioners, midwives and ancestors, who provide counter-forces to and protective rituals against *les sorcières/sorciers*. One such group is *les marabouts* (spiritual masters/*les maître spirituels* who ‘see’ magical forces) or *les guérisseurs du Nord* (healers from North Cameroon, although counter-practitioners exist across Cameroon). Instead of attacking (as in *le koñ* and *le famla*), in this case, supernatural and intangible knowledges are used to repel the bad forces of *la sorcellerie*, to restore health and to protect from harm. Popularised accounts of the feats of *les marabouts*, for example, include the ability to stab oneself with sharp knives without pain and predict future events through ceremonial readings of everyday objects such as shells, dirt, grass, human or animal hair, the movement of crabs, amongst others.

Most people in Cameroon do not practice *la sorcellerie*. Visits to medicine wo/men are common for both protection against bad spirits as well as for routine health problems such as digestion, impotence or infertility. Although most people do

not practice *la sorcellerie*, they are fearful of spirit possession, soul eating and poisoning—this includes practicing Christians who are particularly fearful of diabolical possessions (see Piot’s 2010 related analysis of the simultaneous growth of Pentecostalism and witchcraft accusations in Togo). Accusations of witchcraft are dangerous for the accused, as they entail stigmatizing the person through public shaming and can culminate in violence, imprisonment, banishment or death. Indeed, much of the violence associated with witchcraft across Africa is that resulting from witch-hunting or *les chasses aux sorcières*.

Cameroonian epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* are dynamic and have shifted—and continue to shift—throughout and across space and time (Geschiere, 2013). Contemporary epistemologies of Cameroonian *sorcellerie* have been influenced and changed through historical-political processes, among them, the almost perpetual barrage of loss, domination and violence through the experiences of slavery, imperialism, colonialism, current-day stratifications and the re-entrenchment of poverty following the 1980s economic crisis and the attendant Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Cyprian F. Fisiy (2001) traces what he calls the ‘increasing ambiguity’ of witchcraft during the mid-1980s, when Cameroon experienced a perfect storm of economic catastrophe: the collapse of global market prices for cocoa, coffee and cotton devastated agricultural sectors. The price for a barrel of crude fell from 29\$US in 1984 to 26\$US in 1985, descending even more to 10\$US in 1986 (Takougang, 2004: 112). As part of IMF and World Bank comprehensive reform, Cameroon’s monetary unit, the franc CFA (Central African Franc), was depreciated by 40 per cent in 1986 and then 50 per cent in 1994 (Mentan, 2003: 120); as a consequence, Cameroon received remarkably less for its exports than it had in previous years. The loss was enormous, as Joseph Takougang (2001: 113) observes:

Cameroon's total exports, which 'had exceeded 1,000 billion francs CFA in 1984/85, dropped to 575 billion francs CFA in 1986/87'. At the same time, civil employee salaries were reduced by 60 per cent under SAP restrictions. One consequence of this reduction was an increase in small-level corruption. As civil servants (from court clerks to teachers) scrambled to make ends meet, some began to require a 'tax' on previously uncharged state services, in turn, placing increasing pressure on people. The generation born in the 1980s became known as *la génération perdue* (the lost generation), signifying the desperation and the disappointment of the decades between 1980 and 2000. Tatah Mentan (2003: 125) explains the historical reverberations of Cameroon's subsequent entry into the IMF and World Bank's 'debt reduction package' known as the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPAC):

Cameroon will be required to produce exactly the same kind of crops and raw materials as it had under colonialism and to use its earnings to buy from the former masters machines and processed goods.

Alongside these economic changes of the 1980s, Fisiy and Geschiere (2001) note that, 'witchcraft discourses' in Cameroon produced 'ever-new meanings', including 'secret ways to get rich; access to global, occult networks' (Fisiy & Geschiere 2001: 241). Rumours emerged about a 'new witchcraft of wealth' that have nation-wide interest and fascination. According to Fisiy and Geschiere, Cameroonians insist that these are new forms of *witchcraft* (as compared to older forms, like the witchcraft of eating people, walking in people or tying people up in the night). These epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* constitute a sort of 'witchcraft of labour' as people are transformed into zombies (their souls or spirits are removed from their physical bodies, leaving the bodies as a vessel for labour exploitation) and forced to work on invisible plantations. In Cameroon, stolen bodies become the secret of modern day wealth (Fisiy &

Geschiere, 2001: 241)—a wealth that is deeply violent. It is in this context that the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was constructed.

Interestingly, even when people are sceptical of *la sorcellerie*, their knowledge of it can still be employed as a means to critique illicit wealth generation. Along the pipeline a handful of non-believers deployed narratives of *la sorcellerie* in inverse: here '*la sorcellerie*' as a form of wealth generation practiced by 'imitator' *marabouts* or imitator *sorcières/sorciers* through elaborate and often time-intensive ploys designed to trick *les mougous* (naïve folk) into believing the 'fake *marabout*' possesses magical powers. By convincing the person (usually but not always targeted for their pre-existing power and wealth i.e. 'le boss', or access to wealth as in '*le fis de—*') that they possess magical powers, a sum of money is requested to *désensorceler* (disenchant) a curse placed on the person that threatens to end their privilege or power.

What is important from this broad synopsis is the heterogeneity of practices alongside a popularized epistemology of witchcraft that transcends localised boundaries, as well as understanding that varying forms of witchcraft are not mutually exclusive but can exist side-by-side in the same place. Also important to note is that despite particularities in practices, beliefs and origins, it is widely agreed that those who practice *la sorcellerie*—that is to say who attack others through *la sorcellerie*—are dangerous because they sacrifice life in the pursuit of their self-interest.

Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*: a critique of power along the pipeline?

The invisible domains of power, the demolition of pipeline buildings and the underground, liquid properties of petroleum give credence to understandings of oil as mysterious, dangerous and socially and environmentally poisoning. Watts (2001: 205-

6) describes these magical qualities surrounding oil as ‘petro-fetishism’ or as a sort of ‘petro-magic’. This petro-magic is likened to the ‘El Dorado Effect’, where wealth is ‘ephemeral, here today gone tomorrow... In the popular imagination, oil produces all manner of extraordinary magical events and mythic properties’ (Watts, 2001: 206). Similarly, Fernando Coronil (1997: 370) explains the magic brought about by Venezuela’s exceptional petro-wealth as one that ‘transfigured politicians into magicians who embodied the myth of progress and gave it specific form.’ This petro-magic mirrored, he explains, in particular ways the colonisation of the Americas by Spanish conquerors, particularly the system ‘which treated wealth less as the result of productive labor than as the reward for activities not directly connected with production, including conquest, plunder, or pure chance’ (Coronil, 1997: 390). Similarly, Mandana E. Limbert (2010: 3) writes of the abrupt socio-political, economic and infrastructural transformations brought about by an influx of oil wealth in Bahla, Oman; she recounts peoples’ mixed feelings of joy and fear: ‘Or is it a dream? Will all the apparent wealth and infrastructural glamour disappear... as mysteriously and suddenly as it appeared?’ Not only is wealth seemingly magically produced in its effortlessness and remarkable dearth of labouring, but also the invisibility of the material, of the subterranean crude, reaffirms the surreal or even supernatural origins of the wealth. In Cameroon, petroleum is not supernatural for its self-generating wealth but for the enchantments needed to access the networks of power through which that wealth can be accessed.

In Nanga, community members witnessed the effacing of the pipeline’s construction materials, so that visible residues remained. For example, I was told by a group of temporary labourers who had been employed during the pipeline’s construction phase that the heavy machinery used during construction was

dismounted and buried upon completion. I visited the former labourer work camp, where the roofless, half-demolished buildings stood as testimony to the attempted erasing or concealment of the pipeline's passage. The destruction of these 'surplus' materials—which could very well have been used by nearby villages after the construction drew to a halt—echoes the stories of abandonment and disregard that people describe experiencing at the hands of COTCO and politicians who profited through the project.

Some of the most heated debates that I saw during nearly eight months in two communities along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline were those in which people identified culprits or actors responsible for the mismanagement of the pipeline project. When pressed to explain the processes of crop destruction or the actions and actors involved in the pipeline's implementation, construction and decision-making network, people sometimes used frameworks of *la sorcellerie* to refer to shadowy figures compelled by greed with no apparent care for the wellbeing of other humans, so that while invisible powers came together to produce the pipeline, *la sorcellerie* confronts the epistemic challenge of knowing unseen infrastructural and technical systems that cannot be sensed in their entirety. In epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*, the material and immaterial are not dichotomous. The visible material of the world is understood as emerging out of a profusion of invisible forces—as with the construction of the pipeline—which comes in and out of visible realms.

In Mpango, a village nearby Kribi, the mystery of the pipeline project was captured best by those living in the shadows cast by the communications tower of the pipeline's pressure-reducing regulator station near the Atlantic coast. The sub-sea pipeline extends 11 kilometres into the Gulf of Guinea to the Floating Storage and Offloading (FSO) vessel, where crude is exported on tankers for refining and



Figure 29. A fenced pipeline van station near Nanga.

eventually for exchange on the global market. From Kribi's beaches, the FSO flare is just visible on the ocean's skyline. In Mpango, Sewa told me, 'COTCO operates like a religious sect; it is a total mystery what goes on over there'. He indicated with a wave of his hand towards the workstation tower that was a couple hundred yards from where we were sitting near the *gendarmerie* checkpoint at Mpango's entrance. Sewa continued, 'All we know is that new uniforms and new trucks go in but they never come out. We have the impression that they do magic in there' (Sewa D., in Mpango, 02/01/13). COTCO security personnel strictly monitor the regulator station, which occupies five hectares of land between Kribi and Mpango. During my first visit, I was roughly pat-searched and forced to erase a photo of the site, despite having research authorisation from the *Sous-Préfet*. Cameroonians are not allowed onto the site and I was told that barricades are set up at intervals to hinder movement off the road.

In narratives of the pipeline in Nanga and Kribi, consortium employees were variously associated with or described as *les sorcières/sorciers* or as evildoers and as greedy, bad neighbours. People sometimes understood the employees of the Cameroonian national oil oversight body (COTCO) as embodiments of a dangerous and hurtful threat: operating in unseen boardrooms, zooming past in gleaming new vehicles and disappearing behind the barbed wire-topped fences of the COTCO stations—but always just beyond the reach of local people.

In Mpango, Frankie told me, 'We see them enter, [but] they never exit. We can never go in ourselves. Maybe we need to go to Douala [the financial capital] to ask permission or to apply to work ... they don't even make purchases at local markets! They never come down to our village and we have no contact with them ... Look first at all the battalion of security that keeps us out of the worksite. Their security is like a military base' (Frankie N., Mpango, 30/01/2013). Frankie emphasised that COTCO

employees, despite their close proximity to the village, fail to engage with the people of Mpango except through exclusion; power and wealth exists all around them, making their exclusion all the more acute. Similarly, during a discussion with several women in Bilolo, Sandra told me:

Sometimes you see COTCO people; they don't even say hello; they just get directions to the pipeline and go into the brush to do whatever they do in there. Not even a thank you... [Before] they came for [village] reunions [meetings] to educate us about what to do if we see a little bit of black liquid... they [would] bring a little envelope with 3,000 CFA and tell the chief to sign that he is okay with it (Sandra B., Bilolo, 07/02/2013).

These stories allude to the COTCO employees as misbehaving and disrespectful foreign visitors. COTCO employees and representatives are individualistic in their failure to observe basic salutations. The woman also calls out COTCO employees as *chiche* (unreasonably ungenerous) with villagers, meaning they do not fulfil the neighbourly norms of reciprocity and deference. Similarly, in Bisiong, Christine said,

they [COTCO] told their workers to never purchase food from the villages. They got their food and water from town [either Kribi or Douala] and brought it with them... The local boys went to the bush to work...[and found that] when you kill a serpent, they take you off the job! They [COTCO employees] did not eat meat. They do mysterious things! (Christiane L., Bisiong, 07/03/2013).

Moreover, people associated COTCO with magical materials in diverse ways, for example pointing out their access to seemingly self-generating wealth, their affinity for visiting the bush or uncultivated forests and their lack of fear for dangerous creatures such as snakes. People remarked, for example, with confusion and exacerbation that COTCO employees would walk into—instead of around—remote sections of bush. This propensity for walking into the forest for unknown reasons likens them to *les sorciers*, who practice magic in these areas of dark, mystical forest. In Nanga, Gisele explained in passing, 'you know, the forest is mystical' (*mystique*) to refer to why people in Nanga are hesitant to work trimming and slashing in the bi-

annual clearing of the pipeline's right-of-way. The suspected affinity of COTCO employees for the forest and for the serpents that live there—snakes are very dangerous to non-*sorcières/sorciers*, but their skin is a source of empowerment for *les sorciers*—reinforces their connections to *les choses mystérieuses*.

In Bitoumbi, located between Mpango and Ebomé near Kribi, Blanche told me, We have a memory of the pipeline. In our tradition, when an event occurs, there should be a task [or a ceremony] that shows that [it] has happened. But in fact, no, we have no [such] good memory of the pipeline. There was no good act to show that it happened... the moment that our plantations were destroyed, we arrived one day to find it so [and] we started to cry, but no one wanted to listen, no one wanted to take our hands... (Blanche, Bipindi, 10/02/2013).

Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* provide a powerful language against selfishness, greed, individualism and domination. They provide commentary on forms of social violence and domination and rebuke them. Nyamnjoh (2001: 31) explains that in such an epistemology people are 'allowed to pursue his or her own needs, but not greed'. Agency in this paradigm is much different from that stressed in Euro-America, where the focus is on the principality of the individual. In Cameroon, agency is one of interconnectedness and 'harmony between individual interests and group expectations' as people are expected to pursue their own diverse avenue towards individual self-worth while maintaining a faithful and respectful eye on collective wellbeing (Nyamnjoh, 2001). These epistemologies inform the social realities along the pipeline and reveal seemingly irreconcilable differences in the epistemologies of Cameroonians and the teleology of individualism and profit that are at the core of corporate practices. As Ngoulo Ngali emphasised,

[COTCO] needs to look at their relationship with the public. No one in this village has ever touched anyone in COTCO. But it is like they are not human. How can you install yourself in a village and the first thing you do is turn your back on the village? And they say they are well educated! You would think that we were chez-COTCO [in their house] instead of the contraire (Ngoulo Ngali, Mpango, 2013).

By associating COTCO with sorcerers, people conduct an important censoring of the

individualistic procedures and practices of the pipeline. These censoring narratives demand respect for life in a context where the oil consortium is characterised as being a poor neighbour and as having a ‘bad heart’ (Marcelline N., near Kribi, 16/09/12). According to epistemologies of *la sorcellerie*, violence occurs naturally and all humans have the potential for violence and greed; but violence is emphatically negative for the wellbeing of the community and is curtailed by a framework of social and familial responsibility and expectation. Might, then, Cameroonian popular epistemologies provide a framework for an imaginary capable of resisting ‘the economic and cybernetic “babble” of the “neoliberal project”’ and its individualistic nature (Thorne & Kouzmin, 2013: 125)? Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* are well suited to *name* and *condemn* the violence(s) of global coloniality in Cameroon. However, we must first come to terms with the violence(s) embedded within practices of *la sorcellerie*.

Jealousy, rupture & community conflict: *la sorcellerie ne vient jamais de loin*

The construction of the pipeline brought with it a certain temporary euphoria in the lives of people along its course: people thought that the pipeline would translate into permanent wealth for their communities. Families that routinely made less than 200\$US in a year suddenly had access to reimbursement and compensation lump sums of several thousand dollars, with, they told me, very little sense of the temporality of this wealth and the long-term ramifications of the destruction of their plantations.

In Kribi and Nanga, people’s access to the pipeline project’s wealth was limited and, on many occasions, people reported their reimbursement and compensation monies being appropriated by those with access to networks of power. COTCO

employees as well as political leaders and bureaucrats with local power and regional power were suspected of having alternately ‘sacrificed’ local people to ensure their own profit (by not ensuring proper environmental oversight, for example) or as having ‘eaten’ the reimbursement and compensation monies rightfully belonging to villagers. The despotic underbelly of wealth and power creation is understood as existing albeit necessarily out-of-sight. Power is understood indirectly and with an awareness of its invisible components. At the same time, the uneven distribution of wealth, dispossession and risk effected by the pipeline caused jealousy, unease and distrust among community members, resulting in rupture and conflict because frustrations were directed at family members and neighbours. In this sense, the pipeline intensified friction within the community based on wealth inequality and jealousy.

The exacerbation of poverty that accompanied the pipeline and the simultaneous creation of new economic inequalities tore families apart and set people against each other. Because reimbursement was issued individually—in spite of the widespread local practice of collectively managing land under the custody of the head of the family—families report being caught up in disputes over the allocation and use of reimbursement funds due to speculation that family members were not properly sharing. People’s accounts reveal anger, jealousy and tension over the reimbursements allocated from pipeline damages. Theo said,

The pipeline created huge discord between families. The forest was touched [i.e. farmed] by me, [so] if I do not give millions of CFA [to my family members] that creates jealousy. Even my brothers think my papers of reimbursement were fake and that I lied, that I was keeping money from them. I even heard stories of assassination like that in Lolodorf [a nearby town]. That project was poison! (Theo O., Kribi, 02/15/13).

People report being uninformed, poorly informed or miscomprehending, thinking that money would continue to pour into their communities; as such, most people report

spending all of their reimbursement monies within the first year (monies calculated by the World Bank and oil consortium to last the six to seven years that it takes the fruit bearing trees cultivated in the area to produce). In Mpango outside of Kribi, André said it best, ‘The pipeline was like a mirage: at the beginning we saw it like a beautiful thing, but it was corrupt inside’ (N. André, 30/01/2013).

Reimbursements were often not spent, as the consortium intended, on reinvesting in seeds, land and labour for the destroyed crops. Reimbursements issued to an individual were generally split up between extended families (this includes uncles, aunts, cousins and in-laws), so as to give to each family member what was considered their share. These shares were subsequently divided into smaller sums and spent on immediate material needs: school fees, medications, doctor’s visits, food and sometimes to ‘*faire la coq*’ or to strut like a rooster so as to impress others, oftentimes through *le farrotage* or excessive spending and giving (for more on visible displays of wealth, power and *le farrotage* in Cameroon see Malaquais, 2001; Mbembe, 2002; Rowlands, 2011).

In cases where people were properly reimbursed, the valorisation of visible displays of power and wealth undermined the process of reconstructing plantations after their destruction during pipeline construction. The politics of power in Cameroon are such that sizeable social pressure is exerted to ensure that people share power and wealth among family and community members. Adding to this is a culture that venerates visible displays of conspicuous consumption. In many instances reimbursement for the destruction of plantations was the first occasion for rural and peri-urban peoples of Kribi and Nanga to enter into privileged spaces of wealth spectacle as participants (as opposed to their role as perpetual observers). Those with institutional power are first and foremost to engage in rituals of extravagance and

wealth; this includes the president, who is renown for his multi-month European vacations. However, when practiced at the lowest socio-economic levels, by people living in the rural villages and urban *ghettos* (slums) of Cameroon, these practices are drawn upon to dismiss people as unthinking, irresponsible and wasteful. This was evident during my conversations with figures in positions of power (excluding village chiefs), who dismissed people's claims that the pipeline brought about new poverties and dispossessions by arguing that poverty is a reflection of people's propensity for irresponsible partying. According to a former COTCO programmer, people 'drank' and 'partied' away reimbursements only to 'cry' and 'complain' when their plantations were not replaced (Steven Coll's 2012 discussion of the reimbursement likewise reflects this notion that people were irresponsible in their money managing). Consortium and government officials blamed villagers for 'improperly investing reimbursements', implying that the failure of the project was a result of local people mismanaging the reimbursement funds that they did receive. The refusal to acknowledge the pre-existing tenets of social interdependence in Cameroon created a context for inter-communal violence and an ideal space for witchcraft accusations, further rupturing the communities.

In one case, a woman told me that the pipeline destroyed her family's plantation; her brother, Roger, was 'driven mad with jealousy' under the impression that his father had become enormously wealthy through the reimbursement process. According to his sister, who lives in a village outside Nanga, Roger and his father, Crispin, argued for several years over the family's reimbursement, which was issued to Crispin. Roger was not satisfied with his father's assertions that the money had been spent and felt betrayed by his father, eventually growing to hate him. Believing that his father was selfishly keeping the money to himself, Roger shot his father in the

chest and then sought out his father's second wife, Afana, and shot her several times, killing both. A stray bullet grazed the torso of a neighbour's ten year-old child. Roger's half-sister, sick inside the house, died a few hours after the shooting. A neighbour told me that the sister's tongue turned black just before her death and rumours started soon after that the third death was the result of witchcraft and that Roger was possessed. To the people I spoke with about the event, including Roger's sister and two neighbours, this is a case of greed-induced witchery: the social ruptures caused by the pipeline exacerbated pre-existing dissatisfactions and triggered the murders.

While the people in Nanga and Kribi accused COTCO representatives as well as national and regional officials of *l'escroquerie* or illegitimate appropriations of wealth through unseen means in out-of-sight spaces, this same discourse of trickery was turned back upon by people living along the pipeline by powerful actors. Political geographers reveal the ways in which institutional actors employ the 'politics of scale' or 'perform scalar politics' to absolve themselves of culpability and serve their own interests (Swyngedouw, 1997a, b; Daley, 2008; Escobar, 2001: 161). Patricia Daley (2008: 232), explains that, 'dehumanization of the African has and continues to take place on a global, continental, regional, national and local scale' and only by scaling up—from the local authority who sanctions violence, to the discrimination of the national state and to the indifference of the international community—can we see the networking of power practiced at each scale: local, regional, national, international.

Similarly, the official narrative postulated by the World Bank, COTCO and ExxonMobil was that people were dishonestly endeavouring to misappropriate money by intentionally planting along the pipeline route or miscounting their agricultural

output as a means to obtain more reimbursement. The Bank, moreover, directed its discourse of *escroquerie* to national and regional leaders for mismanaging the spending, most famously Chad's President Idriss Déby. ExxonMobil press officers, for example, emphasise their role as 'guests' in communities like Nanga and Kribi. By emphasising the corporation as a non-resident, they therefore are not responsible for the social, political and environmental wellbeing in the countries where they operate. Steve Coll (2012: 363) describes his conversations with ExxonMobil presidents and project managers, as they 'emphasiz[es] that the corporation was merely "a guest... and as a guest we've got to show respect... It's not up to us to go into a sovereign country and tell them how they ought to be governing their people"'. This is a tactic of scalar blame-displacement, with ExxonMobil positioning itself so that it not accountable for 'local' problems. It is precisely the operations of neo-liberalised and globalised capitalism that produce the unseen actors and actions of economic and structural violence that reify the shadow world, that intensify the unseen coagulation of uneven power in places like Cameroon. This power of the unseen and the mystification of wealth can be scaled up. Local, regional and national players mediate access to the employment, reimbursement, compensation and enrichment made available through the extraction of oil.

These power negotiations—always filtered by the visible and invisible in particular ways—continue today, more than 10 years after the pipeline became operational. In Nanga, my presence was surrounded with various suspicions about my access to networks of power; who was I? Could my proximity to power result in new reimbursements for past dispossessions? People would occasionally approach me in secret to say that so and so 'is lying—he was well reimbursed but wants more' or so and so 'told me not to betray the community by revealing that he was well

reimbursed'. *Le droit à l'oeil*, for example, is a socio-cultural practice when someone has the 'right of the eye' or the right to demand a percentage of the profits when they witness, without interfering, a scam. Whispers, speculations, negotiations abound.

Epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* engage with issues of personal ambition, inequality and power. The work of Gescheire (1997, 2013) is insightful in highlighting the relationship between witchcraft, accumulation and family relationships in Cameroon. Witchcraft accusations and violence occurs from family member to family member and within the same community (Gescheire 1997, 2013). This characteristic of *la sorcellerie*—the relegation of *witchcraft* actions to the level of the family—means that instead of expressing frustrations and anger towards pipeline employees or government officials, people accused family members or close acquaintances of mistreatment, malice and greed. These accusations fractured families and weakened community solidarity. Not only does this contribute to the disposessions of the pipeline project but such community fracturing risks expediting future exploitative projects by pitting people against each other.

Final thoughts on resistance

The exploitation of fossil fuels is a crucial component of *la mangeoire*, or the magical promise of unlimited profit and never-ending consumption, of global coloniality. The Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is situated within a global 'colonial power matrix' built upon racialised resource exploitation, particularly the continuing extraction of oil, that 'affects all dimensions of social existence' (Grosfoguel, 2007: 217). Imre Szeman (2007, 2012) identifies the capitalist epistemology as one deeply and complexly entrenched within oil. Humanity, Szeman argues in reference to Euro-America, has an 'oil epistemology': oil is at the heart of modern capitalism. Without

it the trajectory of capitalism since its development in 1765 would have been irrevocably dissimilar. We would be without cars, air travel, plastic consumer goods, and the communication revolution. So much so that the contemporary senses of being in the world as well as one's relations to others are imbedded within ideas of what exists and what is possible according to a history, present and future *with oil* (Szeman, 2007). Might an epistemology of witchcraft resist the epistemology of oil?

In answering this question, we realize that an inquiry into epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* vis-à-vis global capital must deal with a central contradiction: the dual longing for a socially conscious anti-capitalist message and the angers, pains and resentments that unfold in communities dispossessed by the modernity's oil ontology. Within decolonial literatures, there is an implicit focus on non-Euro-American epistemologies to resist capitalist violence and to provide alternate 'world imaginings' (Mignolo, 2000). An epistemology of witchcraft is capable of capturing and explaining the way that people move in and out of unseen spaces, through unseen processes, which result in hyper-visible violence(s). However, on-the-ground practices sometimes reify or aggravate capitalist violence. This double role of witchcraft in Cameroon—as both a form of cultural resistance to combat and criticise illicit accumulation, inequality and dispossession—as well as in inhibiting organised resistance against the exploitative project and contributing to community breakdown must be taken into account as we look at the intersections between culture, politics and economics in large-scale projects. By this I do not mean to advocate for further incorporations of 'IK'—the World Bank's acronym for 'indigenous knowledges'—within corporate policy or programming.

This case study has emphasised the paradoxical role of non-corporate, non-Euro-American knowledge frameworks in 'local' places, without providing any

‘solutions’ precisely because there are no easy or tidy resolutions. What epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* do offer is an illustration that total knowledge or total transparency may not be obligatory for emancipatory activist-intellectual projects. People in Nanga and Kribi have a vocabulary for describing illicit power, domination and violence.

For the last fifteen years or so, a dominant policy concern has centred on ever-increasing transparency, total exposure, total knowledge and total accountability as a means to navigate or reduce economic forms of exploitation and oppression imbedded within the standard operating procedures of corporate capitalism. Yet in a global media and publicity context where transnational corporations and politicians deftly ‘flux’ between the visible and invisible to transfix the public and continue personal and corporate enrichment (Thorne & Kouzmin, 2013) we risk over-emphasising and becoming distracted by the importance of ‘the visible’ (namely, the ‘visible’ as selectively exposed by those in power) or exposing ‘the invisible’.

In the global financial context marked by enchantments, shadow players and the magical production of wealth through financialisation—speculative bubbles, derivative swapping, shadow banking, financial ‘hidden hands’, the devaluation of currencies, volatile exchange rates, insolvent institutions, the mystification of US central banking along with the pernicious greed of the ‘economic underworld[s] of bankruptcy for profit’ (Akerlof & Romer, 1993)—epistemologies of *sorcellerie* might provide a critique of those uneven violence(s) that arise from these unseen power networks. It should be reassuring that there are epistemologies that already understand invisible forces compelled by greed, particularly as a significant body of work on structural and slow violence is precipitated by the notion that scholar-activists should be compelled to ‘render visible’ this otherwise ‘unseen’ violence (this is a central theme, for

example, of Rob Nixon's 2011 powerful appraisal of 'slow violence').

The epistemologies of the people who live within and amidst global coloniality must be taken seriously and not romanticised in any project that demands economic and political revolution ('change' seems too weak a term). While epistemologies of *la sorcellerie* provide a framework through which people understand the structural violence of the pipeline, they also provide a narrative of how the world should be arranged and how people should comport themselves, so that everyone's needs and wellbeing are met. Emphatically, COTCO and the oil consortium are 'bad neighbours' in an epistemology of witchcraft, dispossessing local people and failing in their views to observe even the most rudimentary courtesies. A young man living near Kribi (Frankie, Mpango, 03/03/2013) said it best, 'It is lamentable. It hurts so much. We hate to even speak of [the pipeline]. Not only did they not bring us development or good things, they are in the middle of creating a big conflict in the community. We need to create structures that live'. The sub-field of political geography is well placed to continue the intellectual project of attending to the complexities of understandings of power in places (always concrete, actual, on-the-ground) where domination and resistance come into being through seen and unseen power networks.

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Article IV
The Right to the Rural?
Routes & Roots of Resistance in Nanga and Kribi, Cameroon

Abstract

This article looks at practices and moments of resistance in two communities along an oil pipeline in Cameroon. I look at factors that distinguish resistances that emerge within these ‘relatively rural’ and ‘peri-urban’ areas in the context of contemporary scholarship on resistance, as a means to re-interrogate the usefulness of an urban/rural dichotomy in resistance studies within human geography. I consider the ways in which particular processes and mechanisms of uneven power inform resistance practices as people resist and struggle in geographies of uneven development. I illuminate key operations and actors of the oil pipeline that influence the tendency for resistance struggles to be quiet, spontaneous or labour-based. Anger, grief, regret and shame express some of the myriad of ways that people narrate a decade of experiences along the oil pipeline. I consider the political environment which shapes resistance in Nanga, particularly as ‘the village of the First Lady’ and as heritage to the presidential family. People in places with approximate positions vis-à-vis the ruling family experience oppression and dispossession acutely in a context in which, for complex reasons that I explore within, they feel they have little political recourse. In Kribi, I look at a spontaneous labour standoff between a group of temporary labourers hired by HomeAccess, a subcontractor of the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company, to manage the overgrowth along the pipeline right-of-way; workers protested on the basis that they were deliberately misled, ill-treated and poorly compensated for their labour by the subcontractor. These cases reveal that the resistances along the pipeline have not been successful in an established sense but that they elucidate everyday life, struggle and trying amidst complex forms of structural violence.

Keywords: agency; resistance; oil pipeline; urban/rural dichotomy; structural violence¹

Introduction

With the construction of the Chad-Cameroon Petroleum Development Pipeline Project (hereafter referred to as the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline or the pipeline) between 2000 and 2003, rainforests, farmlands, ancestral lands and homes were destroyed along a 30 to 50 meter wide corridor in Cameroon. A material land space

¹ Acknowledgements: Oxford University Press’ Clarendon Fund funded the doctoral research upon which this paper is based. I am grateful to the African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) program at Boston College for supporting my finishing year with a 2014/15 Dissertation Write-Up Fellowship. I received insightful commentary on an earlier draft of this paper from participants of the Fall 2014 *Works In Progress Series* in AADS.

the size of the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) was appropriated for the project's 30-year lifespan. The pipeline passes beneath 238 villages and is within two kilometres of 794 additional villages (Lo 2010: 155). The route for the 1,070-kilometre pipeline was determined through 'field reconnaissance expeditions' by the Gulf Interstate Engineering Company, based in Texas. Rural areas were particularly affected by the pipeline project, whose engineers sought to avoid densely populated spaces. This targeting of rural areas was an attempt to reduce what World Bank documents from the project referred to as 'the project's footprint'—the idea was to appropriate as much unoccupied land as possible. This would reduce the project's visibility, decrease the cost of reimbursement for destroyed property and plantations along the pipeline right-of-way and avoid the social frictions and economic costs of human displacement that are often associated with large-scale modernisation projects like oil pipelines.

The result of this approach has been that the semi-rural poor, already politically and economically vulnerable within Cameroon, have predominantly experienced land dispossession and livelihood loss as well as suffered from the long-term consequences of uneven incorporations within the pipeline project. Lacking the means or the will to relocate and without a visible political platform around which to organise (as I outline below), rural people alongside the pipeline have been 'displaced in-place' (Nixon 2011; Mollett 2014; Murrey 2015) or, to put it another way, they have been stuck in places characterised by acute environmental risk, water and soil contamination, deforestation and threats to health in the form of waterborne illnesses and the spread of HIV/AIDS during the construction period. So that, while most people were not *physically* displaced from their homes, they had their plantations bulldozed and witnessed the landscape transform, quite literally, beneath their feet. At the same time

that the landscape dramatically changed and people are psychologically attending to potential disaster along the pipeline, mobility is constrained near the pipeline pump reduction station at Mpango (near Kribi) by Cameroon Oil Transportation Company (COTCO) security guards and pipeline funds are directed towards increasing the state's military power (Murrey 2015).

These social and environmental transformations brought about by the oil pipeline connect and intersect with broader geopolitical struggles over capital accumulation within the region. The effects and experiences of one dispossessing project are exacerbated by the affects of another and another, so that not only are the communities of Nanga and Kribi tied together by their proximity to an oil pipeline (and subsequent experiences of displacement in-place and land dispossession), but they are also united by the concurrent unfolding of other large-scale capital projects, among them a for-export rice plantation, a deep sea port, road construction projects and extensive logging projects. Elsewhere I argue that if we work from the stories recounted by people in Nanga and Kribi, which connect disparate patterns and processes of extraction and exploitation, the oil pipeline can be conceived of as existing within and reinforcing a larger context of structural violence (Murrey 2015). This distinguishes my analysis from that of Michael Watts, whose work on petro-violence in the Niger Delta sets oil related dispossessions and violence(s) apart from other extractions (Watts 2004, 2007). Learning from and listening to people in Nanga and Kribi, the pipeline is not perceived of as an exceptional case of state-sponsored land and resource theft; instead, the pipeline is one project in a long line of *similarly experienced* and *similarly understood* projects. In this way, I use a framework of structural violence to capture the pipeline's situated-ness within as well as its contributions to the structural exclusions and dispossessions experienced by people in



Figure 30.
The
pipeline
terminal
cuts
through the
forest near
Bikolo,
outside
Kribi.

Nanga and Kribi.

The processes and characteristics of neoliberalised structural violence are crucial to an understanding of moments, sentiments and contextual practices of resistance alongside the pipeline's right-of-way. Resistance is understood here as a broad category of creatively social, political, cultural and economic practices through which people strive to affect positive change, rework networks of power, create empowering counter-narratives and chip away at institutional and structural inequalities in their lives or for their communities. Much of these resistances are tactically unseen and non-collective at the same time that they generate pressure (sometimes inadvertently) against hegemonic power.

A broad analytical lens reveals that it is not predominantly fear of repression or political apathy that stymie organised resistance in Cameroon, as some have argued (Forje 2006). The complexity of the processes and mechanisms of the pipeline as well as the wider oppressive framework of structural violence (including militarism, wealth enclavism, land theft and acute poverty with roots in the violence(s) and post-colonially inherited political and economic structures of colonialism) play significant roles in precluding organised resistance. Engaging with multiple, overlapping and mutually constitutive forms of structural violence reveals the complexity of: (i) actors with uneven access to power and operating alternately in visible or invisible spaces, (ii) actions and (iii) elements that intersect in ways that both confuse causality and impede understandings of the operations of domination. A Foucauldian domination/resistance paradigm does not seem to capture sufficiently the uneven experiences effected by a diffuse network of overlapping political, economic, militaristic, ecological and gendered dispossessions, appropriations and exploitations—this nexus can be conceived of through the analytical prism of

neoliberalised structural violence. At the same time, I do not work from an understanding of domination as a permanent feature of human society (e.g., Foucault 1982). All structures have the potential for dismantlement.

Commencing an analysis from an overarching structure of violence or hegemony against which resistance acts has been criticised for casting resistance not as a reflection of human capacity for self-empowerment but as reaction to hegemonic structures (Rose 2002). Mitch Rose (2002: 388), following Gibson-Graham, asks, ‘to what extent does framing practice in terms of “resistance” limit our understanding of social practice and, even more problematically, reinforce the very systems of power that practices of resistance are thought to undermine?’ This criticism arises from analyses of resistance that seem to reduce resistance to survival tactics or coping mechanisms that, through a materialisation as technique to *exist* within (and not destroy) increasingly structurally confined spaces, paradoxically enable the system to continue as such precisely because people adapt and people survive despite violence.

A side-by-side analysis of tangible and actually existing structures of violence alongside a deeply contextualised engagements with concrete practices of resistance—particularly comparative analysis of varying modes and mechanisms of violence and resistance across spaces, which shows how resistance practices are wrapped up in distinctive power relations within diverse communities—remains a component of critical scholarship committed to solving problems on the ground. Engagements with material violence(s) involve confrontations with the ways in which communities sometimes do not seek to upend the system however, dismissing analyses of resistance practices as tantamount to acquiescence (because structural agents are not targeted in efforts to survive) seems likewise reductive. Moreover, resistance efforts by those in positions of power and privilege (including refusals,

counter-acting, rejections, sabotage, collaboration, self-effacing and reporting misconduct), who willingly abandon power in efforts to establish egalitarian and emancipatory societies or to expose injustice, illustrate that resistance is not ubiquitously a product of resistance against or within domination. In the case of Cameroon, for example, such acts of resistance include the case of Eugene Nyambal, a former World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) employee, who was fired for exposing corruption (including \$60million USD in unaccounted for funds) in an IMF-sponsored extractive project with Geovic, a Delaware and Cayman-Islands mining firm, in Cameroon. Nyambal has subsequently been added to the *Do Not Admit* list for Allied Barton, the security contractor for the World Bank and the IMF. Nyambal subsequently sued the IMF for unlawful termination in US District Court. In July 2013, the court denied the IMF's *Motion for Reconsideration*, filed on the grounds that the IMF was immune to US court of law (Edwards and Blaylock 2014). This is just one example of resistance by powerful actors (look at the whistleblowing of Alan M. Dransfield, a former ExxonMobil engineer who has revealed inconsistencies and misconduct along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline) and shows that linear understandings of agency and resistance fails to capture the messy, uneven and textured intersections between everyday life, uneven power, desire for emancipation and structural violence. At the same time, I also am conscious of the need to avoid unrealistically romanticising resistance practices in *my* desire for transformative politics; as Paul Farmer (2004: 307) explains, 'romanticism aside, the impact of extreme poverty and social marginalization is profound in many settings [and often] the impact of such resistance is less than we make it out to be, especially when we contemplate the most desperate struggles and attempt in any serious way to keep a body count'.



Figure 31. Looking inside the fenced aboveground pipeline valve station near Nanga.

Structural violence—like neoliberal ideology is constantly fluctuating, never fixed—is ‘neoliberalised’ (in its contemporary iteration) through its penchant for outsourcing, contracting and subcontracting roles, actions and actors in an ever-widening and ever-shifting global nexus of political and economic inequality. In this context, the ‘battles’ or the ‘enemies’ against which to resist are selected from a large pool of potential battles and enemies: do people resist the Kribi Deep Sea Port project for land dispossession, environmental degradation or labour abuses or do they protest the Chad Cameroon Oil Pipeline for oil spills, the destruction of coral reefs along the Atlantic coast or the continuous expansion of the pipeline pressure reduction station into the villages outside Kribi? Along the pipeline, local interpretations and political contexts of structural violence seem to preclude organised resistance in several ways. First, people note the lack of an agreed upon and identifiable agent against which to

resist—drawing from this notion, labour-based resistance is noted as a means through which people demand access to oil resources in part because a supervisor is visible and addressable. Second, there is a sense of the uncertainty as to a process through which to take organised or even individual action, when people expressed the interest of doing so. The third factor that precludes overt or organised resistance is the trend for community members and communities to be unevenly affected and incorporated within the pipeline's processes and mechanisms.

In this article, I tease out some of the intricate connections and disconnections between resistance and structural violence, not as a cause-and-effect or directly structural phenomenon, but as simultaneously enmeshed, intersecting and discontinuous processes along the pipeline. Does the subdivision, subcontracting and sub-consulting of the processes and actors that enact forms of neoliberalised structural violence result in an attendant fracturing of resistance? How and when do people in places where resistance movements have been violently and swiftly suppressed, like Nanga and Kibi—which are characterised by high levels of structural oppression and are situated in autocratic regimes bolstered by colluding transnational operators who operate through outsourcing and obscurity—resist? What forms do resistance actions take and, as I consider in the conclusion, are these resistances particular to 'rural' spaces?

Definitions of place in resistance literature

The intentionally provocative title for this commentary—the *Right to the 'Rural'*—evokes the powerful and critical geographical literature on the *Right to the City* by forcefully observing that, surprisingly, in the 46 years since the publication of Henri Lefebvre's *La Droit à La Ville* (1968), no work by this title has been published

(nor has there been a publication titled, for example, the *Right to the Village*) while the *Right to the City* has been an influential intellectual project, now with the acronym RTC.² A considerable body of literature has developed around the demand for the RTC since the 2000s (Mitchell 2003; Marcuse 2009; Mayer 2010; Çelik and Gough 2014). My intention here is not to supplement this literature with considerations of the non-city; clearly, doing so would be tantamount to reinforcing (albeit refocusing) the dichotomy. Also, there is a rich and instructive literature on resistance movements in peasant and agrarian studies; this literature has been particularly influenced by James Scott's (1976, 1985, 1990) work on peasant resistances. Scott's (1985, 1990) work likewise helped to inspire a large body of research in the last two decades on indirect forms of resistance through everyday actions.³ However, urban-centric notions of resistance, protest and opposition dominate the critical geographies of resistance literature in the last decade.

Scholars interested in the 'urban' as well as scholars interested in the 'rural' have challenged facile separations between global/local, urban/rural and city/village; notable articulations have outlined the historical and contemporary incorporations of 'local' places within uneven capitalist and globalised processes (Smith 1984; Piot 1999; Tsing 2005; Harvey 2006) as well as literature on the 'peri-urban', or places

² There is Jeffery Sachs' *Millennium Villages Project*, which seeks to end rural poverty through a combination of micro-financing and targeted agricultural and educational interventions. The approach draws upon the primacy of neoliberal finance and capitalist entrepreneurship with no contextualisation of the socio-political roots of poverty and uneven development across Africa. I do not consider this project to be the sister project of RTC because it does not take people's (grassroots) resistance movements, empowerment and socio-political rights as central components.

³ Scott's foundational work, however, tends to ignore the heterogeneity within peasant groups, particularly the role of gender in practices of resistance and has been critiqued for both assigning a privileged position to the psychological and for being somewhat uncritical of everyday forms of resistance; that is to say, ignoring the ways in which a sort of acquiescence (and even conformity or 'active resignation') to hegemony and larger power structures serves as a precondition for certain forms of non-confrontational resistance (Michell 1990; Tiskata 2009).

(usually the fringes of cosmopolitan areas) which exhibit both rural and urban characteristics, including dense populations, a dearth of infrastructure and accessibility. Adriana Allen (2010: 35) explains this merging or overlapping of the ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’ in space, ‘place seems less important than flows of people and materials, commodities, resources and waste [in addition ‘peri-urban’ places might have a] loss of “rural” features (reduced soil fertility, degraded natural landscape) or a dearth of “urban” attributes (low density, lack of accessibility, lack of services and infrastructure)’. In their study of food security in the global south, Amy Lerner and Hallie Eakin (2011), similarly stress that the rural-urban is ‘an obsolete dichotomy’ that inadequately accounts for contemporary shifts in landscape alongside population movement and growth.

These important distinctions have yet to impact thoroughly resistance scholarship, which has broadly continued to reproduce a rural/urban dichotomy by situating particular forms of resistance as ‘urban’ or particular to ‘the City’. Most urban scholars agree that studies on rural-based movements are important but, within the current confines of human geography, such work is not the work of urban scholars and the resulting cumulative effect of this rationale is a disconnect between engagements with resistance in the city and resistance everywhere else. That is to say, we have a body of urban studies literature on resistance that does not engage comprehensively with places outside of the city and thus, there is a spatial separation between discussions of resistances in and outside the city.⁴ How useful is this compartmentalisation of examinations, particularly amidst landscape changes in

⁴ Again, please note that I am speaking of urban *resistance* literature, not urban studies literature more broadly. There are a number of powerful texts that engage with urban-rural connectivity, broader spatial relationships and the production of uneven geographies across space, again *outside* the domain of resistance (Swyngedouw 2010; Catterall 2014).

which the rural and the urban are blurred?

The unspoken, and for the most part unexamined, rule is that there are distinct forms of ‘urban resistances’ (I use quotations here to reflect the difficulty of encapsulating the multitude of complex, ambiguous, even contradictory resistances arising in ‘urban’ places). For example, Bayart’s (2010) powerful and analytically dense study of urban resistance in the Middle East reveals an unexplored and inadvertent naturalization of a dichotomy between ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ space: his text speaks to the ‘quiet encroachments’ possible within the ‘streets’ of ‘the city’. He explains,

The notion of ‘quiet encroachment’ describes the silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied, powerful, or the public, in order to survive and improve their lives. They are marked by quiet, largely atomized and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action—open and fleeting struggles without clear leadership, ideology, or structured organization. While quiet encroachment cannot be considered a ‘social movement’ as such, it is also distinct from survival strategies or ‘everyday resistance’ in that, first, the struggles and gains of the agents are not at the cost of fellow poor or themselves (as is the case in survival strategies), but of the state, the rich, and the powerful. Thus, in order to illuminate their shelters, the urban poor tap electricity, not from their neighbors, but from the municipal power poles (Bayart 2010: 56).

This significant literature is conceptually limited in its ipso facto exclusion of the ‘rural’ as a place of non-discussion, non-analysis and non-engagement. The rural simply drops out of sight, except in reference to rural-to-urban migrants who resist in ‘urban’ spaces. In both Kribi and Nanga, Bayart’s examination of ‘quiet encroachment’ seems powerful in explaining the, often deliberate, avoidance of ‘collective effort[s], large-scale operation[s], commotion and publicity’ (Bayart 2001: 58). As such, the informal is a key to Bayart’s analysis; in looking at Nanga and Kribi, we see that the informal extends well into non-city, peri-urban and *relatively* rural spaces, where people have ‘informal’ or ‘customary’ or ‘precarious’ ties to land; people farm outside the auspices of state control; people illegally distil alcohol, tap

matango or palm wine (during the period of abolition in Nanga, for example) and hunt bush meat; participate in the illegal removal of timber; manage the non-electrification of their homes by setting up phone-charging booths with generators, portable solar panels or ‘touching wires’ (stealing electricity from nearby corporatized plantations, gravel pits and pipeline stations); and non-licensed benskiners (motorcycle taxi-drivers) operate the unpaved streets of the town centres and avoid gendarme checkpoints where papers are verified. In these contexts, Bayart’s theory of ‘quiet encroachment’ seems to encapsulate resistance practices as people in non-urban spaces ‘exercise autonomy’ through ‘constant negotiations’ (Bayart 2010: 60 and 64). If this is the case, what is the conceptual value of engaging with resistance as specifically ‘urban’ or ‘rural’? Drawing from case studies of resistance engagements in Kribi and Nanga, I compare and distinguish two *relatively* rural places, or two ‘peri-urban’ communities (discussed below), and end with some reflections on the analytical value of engaging with resistance through hardened rural *or* urban frameworks and the potentials for scholarship to continue to bridge this binary.



Figure 32. Batteries light up on a generator-powered phone-charging station in Nanga city centre during an unscheduled electricity outage.

Roots of violence & resistance in Cameroon

‘Discovered’ by Portuguese explorers in 1472, the social and economic fabric of Cameroon was devastated by the loss of millions of people over three centuries as diverse societies were forcibly incorporated into the transatlantic slave trade by way of the Bight of Biafra. The geography of what is today Cameroon was annexed by Germany in 1884 at the Berlin Conference, a series of meetings between Western European powers to carve up most of the continent for colonization and formalization of what is known as the ‘Scramble for Africa’. On the ground, this annexation resulted in sizeable uprisings, including violent resistance movements in Yaoundé in 1896, the Boulou and Bassa resistance of 1898-1901 (Tamanji 2011:45), and the almost continuous friction between the Duala peoples of coastal Cameroon and the German colonizers, who evicted entire populations from 1911 to 1914, including the clearing of the Bonanjo district, to make way for the establishment of all-white settler neighbourhoods (Derrick 2008: 18). Nanga-Eboko is so named in honour of a local man, Nanga Eboko, who, for a range of pre-existing political motives, cooperated with German colonialists to suppress anti-colonial rebellion in eastern Cameroon when they arrived in the area via the Sanaga River on ships in the early twentieth century.⁵ The history of Cameroon is fraught with such namings and erasings, as figures seen as amiable to colonial powers, such as Nanga Eboko, are valorised and allocated political and economic privileges amidst ‘divide-and-conquer’ colonial practices (i.e. the practice of rewarding one community or group of people for acquiescing to colonial imperatives, usually with money, guns or political power

⁵ This is a summary review of the history of the colonial period, and I do not have the sufficient space to explore the complexity of the period in this article. The facile construction of a resistance/collaboration dichotomy in the colonial period in Africa has been effectively deconstructed and critiqued elsewhere (Van Walraven & Abbink 2003).

while actively disadvantaging another to foster inequality and division).

The colony was conquered by Britain in a post-World War I invasion that lasted from 1914 to 1916, during which many Cameroonians were called upon to fight on behalf of the Germans (as Nigerians were called upon by the British to fight). In 1916, the colony of Kamerun was divided between the French and British Cameroons. Under 42 years of French colonial rule in eastern Cameroon, missionary and colonial formal school education fostered an aggressive cultural assimilation (Tamanji 2011). At the same time, the vast plantation system based on forced labour that had been put into place by German charter companies, including the Deutch-Westafrikanische Gesellschaft, continued under the guise of the prestation, or labour tax. When people resisted colonial domination, intimidation and ‘divide-and-conquer’ tactics were employed to protect colonial priorities. French colonial authority was based on a system of administrative centralization and assimilation, whereby certain Cameroonians—the évolués—were trained in western education, granted French citizenship and allocated legal rights while the majority was excluded from administrative power (Lee & Schultz 2011: 12).

From 1948 to 1971, an anti-colonial movement led by the Bassa and Bamilike in western Cameroon resulted in guerrilla warfare as French troops occupied the western and littoral regions. An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 people were killed in the French-led razing of villages, as military battalions from neighbouring French colonies were brought in to put down the uprisings, notably Chadian forces (Malaquais 2002; Bouopda 2008; Deltombe et al 2011). Among those assassinated were the leaders of the anti-colonial movement, l’Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), including Ruben Um Nyobé in 1958, whose body was disposed of in cement in an unnamed location and whose head was exposed as a warning in the

public square of Bafoussam. Another important UPC leader, Felix Moumié, fled the country and was poisoned by French secret service in Geneva in 1960.

In the context of pervasive anti-colonial protest movements and popular violence against colonial regimes, French colonialists sought to avoid ‘another Algeria’, as Fanon (1961: 55) explains, by disarming people: ‘The [colonial] purpose is to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation towards the right and to disarm the people’. The route taken to disperse anti-colonial, independence movements, then, was to co-opt the decolonisation process and this was the case in decolonisation of Cameroon. The French installed Ahmadou Ahidjo as prime minister, who would move the country towards independence in a manner that would ‘satisfasse les intérêts de Paris’ (Malaquais 2002: 319). At Cameroon’s independence in 1960, Ahidjo became the country’s first president, as the post-colonial Cameroonian state inherited the coercive codes and practices of colonial primitive accumulation, including land and labour exploitation (see below). Early in his presidency, Ahidjo dissolved oppositional parties and implemented an anti-subversion law as part of ‘la lutte contre la subversion’ (the war against subversion), effectively continuing the French-backed suppression of the independence movement in western Cameroon. Paul Biya, likewise an ally of the departing French colonial powers⁶ (who would later name himself the ‘meilleur élève’ of the former President of France, François Mitterand), served as prime minister from 1975 to 1982. Biya became president following the resignation of Ahidjo in 1982. To secure his presidential power, he eliminated the position of prime minister and effaced symbols and references to Ahidjo in public spaces (Mbembe 1992). After a highly unpopular and

⁶ Biya’s placement in the Ahidjo cabinet as Charge de Mission in 1962 was arranged by the French politician and member of Cameroon’s colonial Territorial Assembly, Louis Paul Aujoulat. Aujoulat was a colleague of the former chief advisor for the French government on African policy, Jacques Foccart.

contested constitutional amendment in 2008, presidential term limits were eliminated and Biya was re-elected for a sixth seven-year term in October 2011. In November 2014, Biya marked 32 years of presidential power and the country remains a de facto one-party political dictatorship (Mbuagbo & Mbe Akoko 2004). This brief contextualisation illustrates both the longevity of resistance while revealing the sustained actions by the colonial and later the post-colonial state against forms of collective dissent in Cameroon.

Routes of power along the pipeline (or, ‘une mangeoire pour tchop, tchop, tchop’⁷)

For this study, I lived in the Cameroonian towns of Nanga-Eboko and Kribi. Nanga is the capital of the Haute-Sanaga (Upper Sanaga) in the Centre Province, with a population of approximately 30,000 (at the time of writing this, the Cameroon Data Portal, the national statistical database, was updated to 2005). The community of Nanga has low rates of education and literacy, low rates of electrification, high rates of out-migration among young people (18-30) and close ethnic ties to the political party in power, Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM). Kribi, with a population of 93,246 (as of 2005), is located on the Atlantic coast, near the pipeline pressure reduction station, in southern Cameroon. Tourism and artisanal fishing dominate Kribi’s economy; small-scale agricultural cultivation (mostly by women) is the principal source of food. Both areas are heavily populated with mixed-crop subsistence farmers who practice traditional slash-and-burn agriculture in evergreen

⁷ This expression, ‘a trough for eating, eating, eating’, reflects the sentiment that the pipeline was an enrichment project—a means to ‘eat’ profit—for those who were able to access the power networks through which project monies were distributed. As the expression goes, ‘la mangeoire est en haut’ or the trough is located at ‘the top’ of the political-economic hierarchy. Those people ‘at the bottom’ are excluded from the networks and spaces of enrichment along the pipeline.

tropical forest environments. In each of these communities, people have strong historical ties to the land that are affirmed through customary tenure. It is problematic to ascribe fixed 'rural' labels to these communities, as each community has mixed rural and urban features. Kribi might be better described as 'peri-urban' for its higher population density alongside the lack of material infrastructure and youthful population (80 per cent of Nanga is under 30 years old). Nanga might be better described as 'relatively rural' for its low population density, ecological degradation, reduced soil fertility and sizeable migrant communities. Moreover, I should note, networks of villages and farmlands surround each town and the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline passes through these lands, which are integral components of the communities of Kribi and Nanga, and *not* the city centres.

Each day approximately 78,000 to 105,000 barrels of crude oil are pumped from the Doba Basin in southern Chad along 1,080 kilometres (670 miles) of carbon steel, underground pipe. The marine terminal is located southeast of the town of Kribi at Mpango; an offloading vessel is stationed twelve kilometres offshore. Here, the oil is loaded onto tankers and exported to be refined and sold on the global market.

At the time of its development, the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was the largest onshore private investment project in sub-Saharan Africa at the time of construction: the US\$4.2 billion dollar brainchild of a consortium made up of ExxonMobil (operator, 40 per cent), Petronas (23 per cent), Chevron Texaco (25 per cent, which sold its shares in June 2014 to the Chadian government), the governments of Chad and Cameroon (3 per cent), and the world's most powerful 'development' agency, the World Bank. The World Bank Group lends US\$17 billion in conditional loans (meaning the policies and programs for spending are directed by the Bank) per year to client countries; Richard Peet explains that, 'The World Bank...is to economic

development theology what the papacy is to Catholicism, complete with yearly encyclicals' (Peet 2003: 111). In the highly politicised context of resource extraction of the 1990s, the World Bank's role in and endorsement of the pipeline was monumental in ensuring the project came to fruition despite environmental and social concerns.

The pipeline emerged at a moment in which there was growing disillusionment with top-down models of modernization and increasing international awareness and disapproval of the so-called 'resource curse' (e.g. the over-dependence on revenues from oil, lack of economic investment in other sectors and increases in poverty, violence and conflict that are associated with oil extraction). This included a mounting awareness in civil society of oil-related ecological destruction, for example the Idjerhe (or Jesse) pipeline explosion on 17 October 1998 in the Niger Delta, during which approximately 700 to 1,000 people were killed (Ola and Eighemhenrio 1998). These criticisms were not unknown to the World Bank (hereinafter the Bank), which came under a wave of international protests in the early 1990s under the slogan *Fifty Years is Enough*, to protest the Bank's history of funding ecologically and socially destructive projects. Around this same time, a memorandum from the chief economist of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, was leaked which revealed the dangers of the Bank's market-centred engagement with people and places—precisely the epistemology being contested by the *Fifty Years is Enough* campaign. The memo, written in 1991, revealed Summers' enthusiasm for the migration of 'dirty industries' and 'toxic waste' to African countries as a means of feasible wealth generation; he wrote,

Shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs (lesser developed countries)?

...I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.... I've always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted; their air quality is vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City.

...The concern over a [polluting] agent that causes a one in a million change in the odds of prostate cancer is obviously going to be much higher in a country where people survive to get prostate cancer than in a country [presumably African countries] where [the] under 5 mortality is...200 per thousand.⁸

Summer's crudely 'profit-over-people' sentiments reflected the economic epistemology that undergirded the Bank's approach to 'development' as wealth-generation-for-the-elite that fuelled the *Fifty Years is Enough* campaign against the Bank. The protests critiqued the Bank's systematic failure to put into effect its own poverty-reduction promises, pushed for increased transparency and eventually gave rise to the Bank's Inspection Panel (Fox 2003).

On 9 July 1998, 86 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from 28 countries sent an open letter to the then President of the Bank, James Wolfensohn, calling upon the Bank to suspend its participation in the pipeline. The letter, spearheaded by Korinna Horta of the Environmental Defense Fund and Samuel Nguiffo of *Le Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement* in Yaoundé, reads, 'the project will lead to escalating civil violence... [and] poverty alleviation does not seem to be the highest priority of both governments' (Horta and Nguiffo 1998). Again in April 2000, a coalition of 200 NGOs from 55 countries demanded the Bank cease oil and mineral extraction projects.

In response to heavy criticism from international agencies and non-profits, the consortium, led by the Bank, crafted the pipeline to be *the* project that would end the

⁸ This 1991 leaked memo is attributed to World Bank official Lawrence Summers (who later became US Secretary of Treasury). Summers accepted responsibility for the memo and subsequently apologised. (The full memo is available online at: <http://www.whirledbank.org/ourwords/summers.html>)

resource curse through the implementation of mechanisms for poverty reduction (Pegg 2006). Part of the project's oil-for-development approach involved massive media campaigns and consultations with 'local stakeholders'. According to ExxonMobil documents, the oil consortium conducted more than 1,000 village meetings in 2000 and hundreds of international and national non-profit organizations were involved in reforming the project's aims, oversights and compensation policies (ExxonMobil Chad/Cameroon Doba Basin profile 2008). ExxonMobil describes the level of public consultation as 'unprecedented': 21,000 consultation meetings involving 300,000 people in what the 2004 ExxonMobil Corporate Responsibility Report (2004, 38) refers to as 'the largest consultation program of its type ever undertaken in Africa and perhaps the world'. The report details the key for project success as 'the creation of a strong partnership with the Bank, which viewed the project as an opportunity to help promote economic development in Chad' (ExxonMobil 2004: 38).

Between 1993 and 1999, 145 meetings between 250 national and international non-profit organisations—a diverse network organising for 'certain minimum conditions' (Djraibe n.d.: 2) and expressing doubts that the international framework for development was practical in the political contexts of both countries—and representatives from the World Bank, the project's oil consortium and Chadian and Cameroonian governments had resulted in a number of alterations to the pipeline's procedures and policies. These changes included 60 alterations to the pipeline right-of-way, the creation of an environmental foundation, two national parks in Cameroon (the Mbam Djerem National Park and Campo Ma'an National Park) and an *Indigenous People's Plan* for forest peoples living near Kribi and Lolodorf in southwest Cameroon.

Unfortunately, as Isaac ‘Asume’ Osuoka and Anna Kalik (2010: 239) argue, the involvement of NGO-driven networks in disputes between communities and oil companies can, as the case of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, ‘reconcile token conflicts...while leaving broader conditions of extraction and mechanisms of industrial power intact’. Community efforts to organise against extraction projects are steered by non-profit organisations into ‘controlled environment[s] where even critical voices serve the overall purpose of stabilizing the existing order’ (qtd. in Osuoka and Kalik 2010: 242). This steering of critical voices was compounded by efforts by the state to co-opt deliberately local activists with ‘false statements, offers of jobs and consultancies, and travel to the United States’ (Djiraibe n.d.: 6). Instead of transforming mechanisms of oil extraction or asserting the responsibilities of the state to ensure the wellbeing of its citizens, the oil consortium makes a public display of accommodating to certain concerns, appropriates the language of critics (for example, by professing a concern for Indigenous people and women) and produces hundreds of thousands of pages of project guidelines, rules and environmental policies. This documentation is a powerful discursive tool in providing the ‘official’ record for the project; however, these abstract regulations are implemented differently in practice, often—as in the case of the pipeline—even before the ground breaking ceremonies have been held.⁹

Indeed, on the ground, Human Rights activists in Chad and Cameroon were threatened, arrested and detained without charge, including Yorongar Ngarledji, who was arrested after he spoke out about the project and supported a moratorium. The President of the *Association Tchadienne pour la Promotion et la Defense des Droits*

⁹ For example, Bank documents stipulated that both countries have Oil Spill Response Plans (OSRP) before the pipeline began pumping. Cameroon’s OSRP wasn’t operational until 2009 (Schwartz and Nodem 2010).

de l'Homme (Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights), Delphine Djiraibe, was intimidated into exile as the Chadian government 'set up a radio and TV campaign asking the population to take action against' her (Djiraibe n.d.: 6). At the same time, the Chadian government created a façade of support for the project by 'creat[ing] forty-three phantom NGOs and activist groups in an effort to groom a friendly civil society representative for the committee' (Ghazvinian 2007: 225).

The pipeline came along at a time when Cameroonians, by-and-large, were dis-inspired by local and national politics (Fombad and Fonyam 2004; Mbuagbo and Mbe Akoko 2004). The pipeline's implementation came after twenty years of neoliberal policies had resulted in privatization, re-entrenchments of poverty, joblessness, and corruption. In the ten years that the engineering details of the pipeline were being negotiated, President Paul Biya was occupied with a violent suppression of movements for the democratization of Cameroon (Fombad & Fonyam 2004). During the 1990s, a series of youth-led nationwide campaigns for a multi-party system—called 'opération ville mortes' (operation ghost town)—shut down major cities. Newspaper accounts detail the habitual use of intimidation and excessive lethal force by paramilitary gendarmes to disband opposition meetings and protests (Fombad & Fonyam 2004). The 1992 presidential election is widely accepted as rigged, including by the US State Department, which suspended US\$14 million in aid and closed its USAID offices in Cameroon (Amin 2004: 168). Biya's track record of arresting and imprisoning journalists, dissidents, activists and former political allies was well documented far in advance of (and throughout the period of) pipeline construction.

The Bank's press release announcing its ultimate approval of the project framework on 6 June 2000—which makes no mention of the political realities on the

ground—describes the project as ‘an unprecedented frame-work to transform oil wealth into direct benefits for the poor’. The Bank’s language of ‘development’ was strategically sanitized and decontextualized from the realities on the ground. Unsurprisingly, despite contentions from the Bank and an oil consortium led by Exxon-Mobil that poverty alleviation and development ventures would be coupled with commercial and capitalist interests in a manner beneficial for all parties involved, the pipeline has directly and indirectly augmented and reinforced structures of oppression, militarism and neoliberalism in both Cameroon and Chad. On 9 September 2008—just four days after Chad had fully repaid its loans for pipeline related funding—the Bank announced that it was unable to continue its support for the project (World Bank IAG Mission Report 2009). The responsibility for the Bank’s withdrawal was placed squarely on the government of Chad, which the Bank asserted, had failed to uphold ‘key arrangements’—namely the misappropriation of the US\$4.3 million signing bonus for the purchase of arms (WB Press Release 2008). The Bank effectively drew upon colonial discourses of a dysfunctional and incompetent African state as a means to displace blame. This displacement of blame strategically obscures the Bank’s complicity and its central role in justifying the pipeline as a development project.

The narratives of people in Nanga and Kribi reveal a complex compilation of emotions regarding the pipeline: anger, despair, disappointment, humiliation, hope, fear. These narratives provide nuanced insights into the material production and contestation of structural violence on-the-ground. Mamasse Mature, chief of Bisiong, near Kribi, encapsulated the disappointment of the project’s failure to increase the wellbeing or livelihoods of people in the area. As we spoke he pulled apart lines of reed to make shrimp baskets to sell in Kribi. He told me,

Compensation [both for the familial loss of land as well as community compensation] was not as it should have been. They should have given us things in our hands, but those things were not correctly done. They gave us, for example, plastic chairs for the village... but what we asked for was not given. We asked for electricity. They said it was too much money. We thought that development—that is what they should have done for us. That development is where? Do you see development here?... No.

Chief Mamasse's reflection prompts me to address another important aspect of my consideration of resistance here; namely, that our conversation occurred a decade after the pipeline became operational. Importantly, at the time of construction, most people remembered being sanguine about the project's potential. This is unsurprising considering the level of consortium emphasis given on the 'development' possibilities of the project; Djiraibe (n.d.: 7) explains,

The consultation process provided an opportunity for the oil consortium to sell the project. When they went to the villages, they revealed only the positive side of the project. People were told that the project would improve their quality of life, and that they would gain money and wealth. No one could refuse something that was supposed to make life better.

In this way, pre-existing poverties and the lack of life opportunities were platforms used to mobilise people's energies in support of the pipeline. Narratives of retrospection provide important insights into how people feel when promises of prosperity have not only gone unfulfilled but have exacerbated poverty, generated new inequalities and affected various forms of environmental degradation. Experiences of deception, to use a word commonly evoked by people in Nanga and Kribi to describe the project, distinguish sentiments today of the project as one of bad-development or maldevelopment, whereas at the time of construction, people recall an enormous optimism in the project's potentials. These stories of hindsight are also instructive in highlighting how experiences of dispossession contribute to an angered collective consciousness against future dispossessions.

Structural obstructions to resistance along the pipeline route

In Mpango outside of Kribi, during a group discussion, several people connected the obscure operations of COTCO and other large infrastructural projects, particularly RAZTEL and the Kribi Deep Sea Port. One man said, ‘they want to employ us like slaves. The port is the same type of project. They all lie to us... it is as if we were still living in slavery. Like we are animals, when they need us they send for our labour’. A few weeks later, Pierre Mbapfoure in Dombé similarly reported, ‘If they tell us the president decided to make another pipeline and the people were okay [with it], it would mean we *are* animals—like sheep. It is like a cockroach that you kill in your house, that would be us!... Biya speaks of us like animals!’

Neoliberalised structural violence is enacted and perpetuated, in part, through the division, subdivision, subcontracting and splicing of actors and actions across regional, national and international scales. This includes, for example, the use of subcontractors and private firms as shadow actors operating outside the oil consortium regulations to manage engineering, construction and labour management; the bureaucratisation and outsourcing (to external consulting firms) of decision making within institutions like the World Bank (Goldman 2005); and the use of non contractual, temporary, migrant and masculinised labour (which excludes women from networks of power and platforms for collective bargaining) to fracture the potential for labour organising within communities.

The pipeline was engineered within a complex political-economic power nexus whose actors navigated and negotiated across and between local, regional, national and transnational scales to determine oil capital distribution and risk management strategies. Capital distribution was highly unequal, with the people living along the pipeline’s right-of-way—the people who lack access to networks of power—

benefiting the least from the oil wealth at the same that risk from the project was unevenly, inversely distributed. In two towns along the pipeline, Kribi and Nanga, people's narratives reflected a consciousness of the simultaneous dispossession of their lands and livelihoods alongside an enrichment of local, regional and national political and economic leaders. People in Kribi and Nanga expressed being unsure who, or what, should be blamed as the cause of the pipeline's inefficient, unequal and dispossessing procedures and processes. This decentralisation of power is a quintessential feature of neoliberalised structural violence.

With such a large number of decision-making, project implementation and oversight agencies, villagers expressed being overwhelmed and unsure to whom to address complaints and in what manner to present them: 'On ne sais même pas à quelle porte cogner' (we do not even know what door to knock on). David Harvey argues, 'Resistance, it seems, comes from being able to recognise the real enemy amongst a frightening array of enemies' (qtd. in Pile and Keith 1997: 5). Ndgila André in Mpango, near Kribi, reported that complaints had been filed on behalf of several community members. Unfortunately, he noted,

As for filing complaints, Oscar [the Community Relation Officer for Kribi] will always see you, but we cannot know at what level our complaints stop. People cannot continue to complain for the same problem every day, we don't have any idea what he does with complaints... They [COTCO] descend in the village when *they* decide and for what *they* deem necessary. They never respond directly to our complaints. They never respond directly to us at all.

Similarly, the Chief of Ebomé, also nearby Kribi, told me,

I do not want to speak of COTCO, it hurts me. They did nothing for us. They destroyed plantations and wells... then they built a well that does not support all of the village. Before the water... was a clean water source... We did not bring a complaint—to whom should we complain? Because the project was approved by the state... [we couldn't turn to the state] NGOs were unsuccessful in bringing change. Many have passed...they always promise to change the bad things that have happened [because of COTCO], but there has been no result.

As the chief's words suggest, not only were people unsure *against* whom to work,

they were unsatisfied and unconfident that complaints would be effective because of the state's endorsement of the project. In cases when people expressed an interest in taking action, there was a sense of the uncertainty as to a process through which to take organised or even individual action.

A third factor that precludes overt or organised resistance is the trend for community members and communities to be affected unevenly by the project, be this a reflection of location along the pipeline, proximity to the pipeline within the village, gender, age, political connections or ethnic heritage. I note five discrete spatial experiences of the pipeline that shape a community member's understanding, knowledge, ideas, and hopes of the pipeline in various ways. Not only are resistance strategies pluriform across space but people's responses to the pipeline (from disregard to adaptive strategies to resistance) can be understood as occurring within various experiential categories that can occur within the same community, i.e. in Nanga people's conceptualisations of the pipeline (as both a material entity as well as their memories of engagement with the pipeline as an experience) can be understood as alternately shaped by:

(a) *The simultaneous experiences of displacement, agro-displacement, land dispossession and proximity to the pipeline.* These people tended to have strong feelings regarding the pipeline: from angry to begrudgingly hopeful. In this case, the pipeline is not over: it continues in everyday effect such as the fluctuating weather patterns that are attributed to the pipeline, an increasing seasonal uncertainty, an awareness of frequent helicopter and satellite surveillance, vibrations and heat caused by the oil travelling through the pipe, continued visits by researchers and civil society members, the filing of new complaints or pending compensation and reimbursement claims, the daily hope that the pipeline will be damaged or destroyed, fear of

environmental and ecological disaster and the sense that the project was an insult and that they were ‘duped’ or stolen from.

(b) *The experience of communal (but not individual or familial) proximity to the pipeline.* These people, who did not have land taken or plantations destroyed by the project, spoke of the pipeline in past tense and revealed a sense that some of their neighbours and friends—sometimes their immediate neighbours—were well compensated.

(c) *The experiences of individual and/or communal proximity to the pipeline and the experience of formal employment by the pipeline during the construction phase.* These men—all of who were men due to the fact that the oil consortium did not employ women—have a fond memory of the construction period and a hope that the project or a similar project will return. There is also a sense that resources would be put to a better use in the future.

(d) *The experiences of individual and/or communal proximity to the pipeline and the experience of informal employment during the construction phase.* These people had somewhat mixed emotions about the pipeline. Some had fond memories of the construction period’s economic boom because they were able to capitalise on the influx of migrant labourers to the area by providing a service; this was often food preparation and sex work. Women were far more likely to be incorporated through informal employment as cooks, waiters or bar maids, cleaners, sex workers and ‘les petites vendeuses’ or small-scale businesses such as selling telephone credit, cigarettes, kola nuts and other items.

(e) *The experience of distanced communal proximity.* Most of these people are unknowledgeable about the existence and particulars of the pipeline; they are distinguished from those above in that they do not live near the pipeline, they did not

ever work along the pipeline and they never had their water source or plantation destroyed by the pipeline.

This uneven incorporation into the pipeline project was one factor that prohibited organised resistance—there was, in this sense, no collective ‘we’ to articulate a unified experience of the pipeline. In Nanga, people remembered being optimistic about the pipeline’s ability to ameliorate their wellbeing, which made pre-construction phase resistance unwarranted. However, following the construction and the failure of the project—not only the failure to bring about positive change but also the failure of the project in the cases where people’s livelihoods were destroyed as new health and environmental risks were introduced. Moreover, as I note below, the local political context in Nanga created particular tensions. The second case I consider is a standoff between a group of temporary workers hired by a subcontractor of the Cameroon Oil Transportation Company to cut the overgrowth along the pipeline right-of-way and the gendarmes.

Getting by in Nanga

In Nanga, symbols of the ruling party abound: pagnes or colourful fabrics decorated with RDPC insignia and Biya’s image are sewn into wardrobes; campaign t-shirts, which are handed out as an impetus to vote for Biya or as visual markers of his supposed popularity even though wearing the shirt does not mean the person votes for or supports Biya, are seen virtually every day; official pictures of Biya hang in government offices; his campaign posters decorate bedrooms; and dusty red billboards of his grinning face and the words, ‘Paul Biya, le choix du peuple’ (Paul Biya, the people’s choice) line the roadside. Politics in Cameroon remain a genre of

the ‘politics of the belly’ but one defined as much by absence as by presence. The 81-year-old, seen but unseen, visible-but-invisible president is jokingly ‘more outside the country than in’. Biya does not make public appearances and does not consent to unreviewed and unrehearsed interviews. At the same time, he exists everywhere in static, unblinking images.

Nanga is the birthplace of the mother of the First Lady, Chantal Biya, and the town is commonly referred to as her ‘village’. Due to this connection with the president’s family, people in Nanga described feelings of political fatalism mixed with political-ethnic solidarity: there is an active discouragement against any movements which might be interpreted as negatively reflecting upon the ruling party or the name of Chantal Biya. Therefore, one man argued, the ‘underdevelopment’ in Nanga and the surrounding villages is *more acute* than in those places occupied by ethnic groups that are perceived of as potential locations to ‘s’enflamme’ (catch fire, politically) and which therefore needed a certain amount of development to remain inactive. Effectively, people reported feeling supra-abandoned by the government because there was not a perceived ‘need’ in to pacify places that are occupied predominantly by people of the Beti ethnic heritage which are expected to express a natural solidarity with the Biya regime.

The perpetual reshufflings of government cabinets—including the imprisonment of so many former government officials as to give rise to the standing joke that Yaoundé’s Kondengui central prison has all of the government officials necessary to run a government except a president—speaks to Biya’s propensity to punish those whom he perceives as a political threat. Many of these imprisoned former officials have been ‘les ennemis dans la maison’ (enemies in the house). With so many examples of the dangers of stepping out of line, people reported feeling afraid to

speaking poorly of the government in any capacity in public. Moreover, as with the colonial system, villagers are closely supervised by a village chief, answerable to the departmental officer (le Préfet), answerable to ministers and the government in Yaoundé. These chieftaincies were created as local proxies during colonialism to sub-



Figure 33. A faded poster of Chantal Biya (a pull-out poster from the magazine, *Jeune Afrique Économie*) hangs on the wall of my room in a homestay in Nanga.

divide power and ensure administrative duties were carried out according to the German and later French colonisers (Quin 2006; Owona 1973). Much has been written on national and regional elites' negotiations for control of and access to the state's distributive networks; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands (1998: 325), for example, explain,

both the Ahidjo and Biya regimes of deliberately fostering ethnic conflict and prejudice against the Bamilike for the purpose of maintaining national unity. The whipping up of ethnic hatred against the Bamilike with the rise of multi-

party politics, he claimed, was to resort to the colonial tactic of promoting tribalism as an excuse to crack down on political opposition in the name of national unity.

These subjectivities are drawn upon in the post-colonial context to co-opt, manage and assuage people's frustrations and angers—often before protest occurs. This colonial inheritance—along with the colonial land tenure system that declares all non-deeded, even if historically occupied, land as state land—was integral to the land disposessions brought about by the pipeline project.

During one discussion with a family outside Nanga, two brothers disputed the origins of the problems regarding the pipeline, exposing a number of questions about the project: Was it the government or COTCO? Was money actually given for the communities but disappeared before it reached the people at the bottom? Who was given the responsibility to build the schools and install the water pumps? Why was the school never finished? Where did the leased employees who were in charge of counting the trees come from?

In the midst of speculation over compensation and against the hierarchy of decision-making that excluded local people, some in Nanga confided that their neighbours had claimed larger tracts of land or had instrumentally planted where they thought the pipeline might pass, as a negotiating tactic to gain access to the oil revenue. So that while resistance is not reduced to self-economic empowerment or enrichment, in this case, such small-scale acts of defiance are resistances against the more powerful actors that would write them out of the project.



Figure 34. A campaign card featuring the popularised image and slogan of Paul Biya—‘le choix du peuple/the people’s choice’—hangs outside a home in Mpango.

Community responses to the pipeline, while never uniform, can be broadly characterised in Nanga as a begrudging acquiescence, demonstrated through narratives that outlined a sense that people were conscious of their particular exploitation as reflective of their proximity to power—because they were seen as ‘aligned’ with the party in power, they were relatively abandoned by ‘development’ projects. In Kribi, on the other hand, the community response can be described as a defiant withdrawal, demonstrated through a series of unconnected refusals: the refusal to plant along the pipeline, the refusal to continue to receive COTCO representatives in villages and the refusal to labour along the right-of-way. A group of seven women in Bilolo, near Kribi, said of COTCO,

They come only to recruit workers. Monday they paid the men [for clearing the

passage way of the pipeline]. Normally, it is the chief that should choose the workers... but they don't even go through the chief. The other day they made him sign, I told him not to sign because they can use that to excuse any amount that they paid the workers, and we didn't even know [how much that was]!... What discouraged people was that sometimes they went two weeks without pay. They waited for their date... I came that day and found that he had already signed the paper. Otherwise I would have grabbed it and refused that he sign! I leave here and walk how many kilometres to get water?

The chief's wife's indication of her desire to refuse to sign the paper authorising the payments of the men hired to clear the pipeline's passageway reflects the trend for people in Kribi to express their displeasure with the project through withdrawal and refusals. While neither of these responses in Nanga nor Kribi were orchestrated or organised, both were frequent enough to be characterised as place-based struggles according to the particular parameters and concerns within each place.

Labour resistance in Kribi

The pipeline project was narrated as a failure, in part because of the destruction of local production systems (predominantly, but now always, subsistence farming, particularly the farming of tubers such as manioc, a staple food farmed by women). Moreover, the pipeline failed to produce permanent employment. In this case, the exclusion of local men from skilled positions and the exploitation of their labour, which was often managed by subcontractors, was a key platform for resistance.

Chronic unemployment is a socio-political problem of tremendous proportion in Cameroon. In Kribi, 90 per cent of the population is under 50 years old and approximately 65 per cent of that population is unemployed. Unemployment is a verb, it is something that one does: to 'chôme' is to practice non-employment ('je chôme' literally means 'I un-employ' or 'I do unemployment'). 'Chômage' (the verb) is a fusion of the practices of 'se balader' (strolling) and 'se falla' (literally means to 'look for oneself' but is employed as 'he is looking for a means to make something of

himself'), in the search for 'business' and 'les réseaux' (networks) that might lead to some form of employment (usually temporary and informal). To 'se falla' is to engage in constant unemployment through creativity and flexibility, such as the ability to pursue several prospective business, professional and scholarly endeavours simultaneously. Walking around, surfing the Internet and going to bars become forms of work in the absence of permanent employment. In this context, Frankie, the brother of the woman I was staying with in Kribi, explained the relationship between labour and resistance in Cameroon:

Tell us to revolt against poverty, we will not [do it]. Tell us to revolt against political corruption or the Biya regime, we will not. We will say, 'Why do you want our children to die in that way—to enter into the risk in that way? Send your own children.' But when you do not pay us for our work or when you pay us poorly, there, my friend, we will always revolt. We Cameroonians will enter into the streets every time.

Indeed, along the pipeline, open resistances occurred principally in the realm of labour disputes. This penchant for resistance efforts to converge in the realm of labour in Cameroon is reflected in the sustained striking in August and November 2014 of 1500 labourers employed by the Chinese company, CWE, to construct the Lom Pangar Hydroelectric Dam; the long histories of autonomous trade union movement by the West Cameroon Trade Union Congress (WCTUC) and teachers union organising (Konings 2003); recent organising by transportation workers against rising fuel costs; as well as the roots of Cameroon's anti-colonial movement (spearheaded by the Union des Peuples du Cameroun) in the Union of Confederate Trade-Unions of Cameroon (Nyambo 2008). Resistance in Cameroon is not limited exclusively to labour organising, however, as illustrated by the student-led protests of the 1990s and 2000s, the pro-democracy movement of the 1990s and the coalescing of the rising cost of living (particularly fuel prices) with the Constitutional amendment to prologue Biya's tenure in February 2008.



Figure 35. Temporary workers protest *Home Access* in demand of sufficient payment for work completed along pipeline route, Mparao, Cameroon.

COTCO subcontracted the oversight and the management of right-of-way clearing to smaller comp

labour and environmental regulations. ExxonMobil and Chevron, for example, are accountable to US business overseas laws for work performed directly by their companies; on the other hand, the labour they contract out to independent companies is not constrained by US laws.

This subcontracting of tasks enabled contractors with political connections to the Idress Déby administration in Chad and the Biya administration in Cameroon to broker jobs. In Chad, these subcontractors ‘skimmed off what a Chadian court later determined to be \$7.5 million in wages, money that never reached the workers who actually built the derricks’ (Coll 2012: 354). Due to the high unemployment rate and the sense that money was lucrative along the pipeline, in Cameroon, to secure even an unskilled position during the construction period often required that the person ‘choko’ or provide the ‘gumbo’ (i.e. give financial compensation to man doing the hiring, reported to be 5000CFA or \$10USD). These construction jobs were not permanent; they lasted from a couple of days to a couple of months. The men who worked along the pipeline were reportedly required to take a breathalyser test each morning to ensure no alcohol had been consumed in the 4 hours before work, a practice that men in Nanga found to be humiliating and bizarre; these practices echo earlier colonial judgements that had cast Africans as alcoholic and slothful.

Some of the former construction employees in Nginda, near Nanga, recounted methods they employed to ‘outsmart’ the oil consortium. One man, for example, explained that when the employees were in line to receive their final payment, name badges were taken as proof of required payment. After this particular man received his money, he was instructed to throw his badge aside, presumably where all the others were thrown. He acted like he threw it, he told me, but he actually tucked it inside his shirt. Sometime later, he presented himself for his final payment and they

paid him again. These stories of the construction period afford a means of reclaiming power.

While the Director General is Jacky Lesage, a French ex-pat, COTCO's publicity statements assert that 90 per cent of its workforce is Cameroonian. What this figure obscures is that permanent labourers are recruited from outside communities. Ngouo Ngali, in Mpango, told me that, 'the largest problem is that the children of the village are not employed. There is a lie in the fact that they bring people in from long distances. They take our people only for the machete work. There are educated children here who chomê everywhere in our homes—our homes are full with them!'

As Ngali said, in the case of the permanent pipeline employment, most positions are filled with Anglophone Bamilike peoples from the Western region of the country. Not only does this mean that those communities that are most directly affected by the pipeline are excluded from permanent employment, but that, moreover, COTCO exacerbates pre-existing tensions between Anglophone and Francophone people by privileging one group over the other (a classic strategy in divide-and-conquer colonial rule). Rob Nixon (2012: 71) explains, 'Multinational oil corporations, seeking a pliable workforce, prefer to import laborers from rival communities or distant lands... this practice, in turn, impedes labor unions and civic organizations from developing—organizations that could mesh the workplace with the priorities of neighboring communities'. During a discussion with women in Bilolo, one woman said

How should we do it? We suffer. People have no work—how are we going to do/ what should we do? It is people who are migrant workers who do the work, not even people from the village! There is no work! Nothing. We don't have anything... it is as if the pipeline does not exist here at all... They use migrant children who do not know better, who do not understand the distance [that they are being asked to clear].

The exclusionary hiring practices of the oil consortium and the consortium's subcontractors came to the fore in a labour dispute on Friday, the first of February

2013 in the village of Mpango. Eight men from Mpango had been temporarily employed for three days for ‘right-of-way overgrowth management’—clearing the thick brush that grows above several kilometres of pipeline passage with machetes. On the final day, they refused to relinquish their equipment—hard hats and orange vests—until they were properly reimbursed for the labour they completed. HomeAccess, the employment company charged with overseeing the project, appealed to the gendarmerie to intimidate the men into returning their equipment and going home. This attempt at intimidation was unsuccessful and the men were grouped near the village entrance when I arrived. On the opposite street-side was another group of young men. These were migrant workers brought in to continue the clearing of the right-of-way further inland. One of the young men, Nziou George Stephen, explained,

I am angry for my money! I will wear my helmet to prove it [he puts on his yellow hard hat, confiscated for the moment from the labour company, HomeAccess]. We got into a dispute about it because of the distance. First they said they would pay us for 2 kilometres [from Embomé to Dombé] and we said it was 7 kilometres but they refuse to measure it! Now they agreed to pay us for 4 kilometres but only after we complained for three days and finally had to revolt with our machetes in our hands.

Another man continued,

Then they sent the gendarmerie [the military police force; in rural areas, the gendarmerie adopts the role of the local police] to intimidate us! At first they came to intimidate us but after hearing our stories, they [the gendarmes] understood our complaints. Now we are keeping our helmets until they regulate and verify that the work was done well so that they can pay us... They even sent us with one of their own drivers to make sure that the work was done each day but *now* they say they have to verify! They hired 15 workers for 3 days to clear the area, but it took us one week. They paid 50,000 per kilometre but do not measure the distance. The driver even consciously made us go over the agreed upon distance [and clear more land than we were paid for]! They don’t give us water or food. I had to drink some yellow, stagnant water in the forest one day and now I have diarrhoea where I am now!’

His friends laugh. After several more hours of waiting—as HomeAccess apparently verified that the work had been done—the men were paid. It was too little, too late for



Figure 36. Discussion with a group of young men (including the workers who had mounted the strike against *HomeAccess* that morning) about the oil pipeline, unemployment and politics. Mpango, Cameroon.

many of them. Another man, who wished to remain anonymous, explained,

It is not even that the poor get poor—the poor get dead! Now I am in hiding [referring to his move from his original village, Landi] because when you speak the truth they point their finger at you as a rebel. On two different occasions I worked for sub-contractors of COTCO—but does COTCO not give them certain laws for our treatment? I remember that COTCO said we would have Tangui [bottled water] but then the boss filled empty Tangui bottles with water from anywhere [exposing the workers to water born illnesses]. They made us break rocks all day with our own hands; when we worked over the hours of pay, they never paid us extra. I worked as a guard of one of the van stations for two years and made 50,000 CFA per month. I worked from 6am to 6pm, and when I finally calculated what I was making a day, I was furious to realise it was 1,500 CFA a day! 1,500 CFA a day! I was so furious against everyone all the time after that, it was not a good time for me... But I know everything in Cameroon is politicised. I decided to quit because otherwise I would punch someone or cut someone with a machete. But I did not abandon ‘work’—I stopped my slavery!

George Thierry Simava reasoned,

One reason that people do not revolt is because we know they are simply waiting for a revolt before the Americans use it as a justification to send in a military and take the country! Big companies do not try to have good relationships with local villages. It is not just COTCO, it is also RAZTEL and the [Kribi Deep Sea] port. They do not consider the wellbeing of the population. They prefer that strangers come and become rich than to see us develop. It creates jealousy and anger—is it not that they want us to *s'en flame* (catch on fire) and corrupt into violence? They must want us to kill ourselves fighting [each other]... I will die, my children will die, and that thing [pointing to the pump reduction station on the horizon] will still be there. It won't be until this region is empty, we are all dead and this region has been totally devastated by desertification that change will come... but when the equatorial forest is destroyed, where will we hide [from the sun; or, where will we be able to live]?

Conclusion

In Nanga and Kribi, the pipeline's passage left behind communities increasingly conscious of struggles over resources. For some, such as Teni Francois Aye in the village of Mbong-Sol outside Nanga, the pipeline is unforgettable. He and his family live with a combination of hope and anger. Hope that things will be better, one day. That one of the researchers who comes will have an impact. Anger each time it doesn't come to fruition. Others, such as Pierre Bienvenue Mbpapfoure, outside Dombé, said, 'If they listen to us, I say never again! If we could unbury it and send it

to another country, I tell you, I would work for free! I would dig it up without any payment! It would be a collective party for everyone!’ The pipeline is remembered as a lost opportunity but also presents a future hope: there is a sense that if a similar project comes to fruition in the future, people will be more responsible with their money. They will have a better idea of the limited time scope and the importance of the opportunity. There is the sense that such a project might come again and that, having lived it once, *this time, next time*, people might make something different of the project: ‘Next time we will not be duped’ and ‘next time there will be violence. I will run them off my [farm] plot with a machete’. This collective memory of the pipeline as an event to learn from among different sectors of the community posits the prevention of injustices from future projects. At the same time that the experience of the dispossessions brought on by the project bolster collective consciousness (emerging through powerful emotions of anger, shame and remorse), however, hegemonic powers reinforce and consolidate power by mobilising pipeline monies to bolster their structural dominance, for example by advancing the project of militarising Chad and Cameroon with pipeline profit (Taguem Fah 2007). This militarisation, in turn, enforces an environment of physical repression toward organised and popular movements against the state, potentially stymying future resistance efforts.

Anger, grief, regret and remorse are revealed through storytelling and joking and these emotions create a sense of shared experience that is tangled with gender, class and ethnic differences, indicating the messiness of the experiences of structural violence. Narratives from Kribi and Nanga show that configurations of politics and power inform struggles over rights to access and struggles against dispossession.

As a scholar working in the field of human geography, looking at resistance and

whose places of engagement are relatively rural or peri-urban, I began my analysis with a consideration of the separation between urban and rural in resistance studies. I critiqued the trend of distinguishing perfunctorily between urban/rural resistances, which becomes problematic when we consider instances in which so-called ‘urban’ resistance practices fall well within the scope of resistances practiced in rural, semi-rural or peri-urban areas: think, for example, of occupying public spaces, re-appropriating state services such as water or electricity, labour-based protests and place-based protests—each of which are also forms of resistance in non-city spaces like Kribi. I then sketched resistances in two communities along the pipeline that might be called ‘non-agrarian rural’ or ‘non-agrarian peri-urban’; that is to say, these resistances are not premised on land-rights or demands for land sovereignty, as in the case with many agrarian movements. Are ‘rights to the city’ played out in similar ways as ‘rights to the town’ or ‘rights to the village’? Admittedly, I could not sufficiently consider all aspects of social and political life that might influence resistance in Nanga and Kribi. I did not look at how people in Nanga and Kribi mobilise kin networks nor did I look at the place of grief in creating solidarity (for example, the particular social spaces of communal potlatches or funerals, where funds are collectivized and community ties are reinforced). Nor did I provide a sustained examination of resistance in Cameroon’s cities against my examination of Nanga and Kribi, which were likewise limited to resistance in the context of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. More needs to be written on how people in urban, peri-urban and rural spaces interact with the state. Moreover, I did not look at relationships between urban and rural places. For example, rural spaces are exposed to and targeted for development/modernisation projects like the pipeline, which feed the cities (particularly the privileged and middle classes). In this sense, empowerment (for

some) in the city is related to disempowerment and disenfranchisement in rural and peri-urban areas.

Despite my intentionally provocative title—the right to the rural!—my argument here is that it is more useful to look at interactions between concrete scales (the global, the national, the regional, the local) than reaffirming the otherwise fluid boundaries between rural and urban in considerations of resistance; also, there is a need for further scholarship on the connections between resistance practices across and between hybrid rural, peri-urban and urban communities. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, we have seen that social mobilisations are often spontaneous, unplanned and that they originate in the bubbling over of everyday toils and often in rural and peri-urban areas, as with the case of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. These struggles begin in everyday forms of resistance that continue for years in particular places. A focus on the urban does not sufficiently account for human resistance; Bob Catterall (2014: 376) writes on planetary urbanisation, for example,

much writing on “planetary urbanisation” with its exclusive emphasis on “the urban” and consequent neglect/denial of “the rural”, and its minimal deployment of the humanities, reflecting the somewhat ramshackle condition of the socio-spatial sciences, cannot do justice to the nature of life on the planet and therefore cannot provide an adequate account or critique of planetary urbanisation, in fact is in danger of becoming an accomplice in that imperial(ist) project.

In this context, Lefebvre’s considerations on the *Right to the City* might be expanded, to provide an approach for looking at the spatial relations of resistance and domination across the urban/rural divide in Human Geography. This project is not directed at reinforcing the rural/urban distinction by supplementing the story of the rural to the story of urban—it is about having the transdisciplinary dialogues that Catterall (2014) alludes to, as it is increasingly clear that narrowly defined single-

subject intellectual projects risk diluting the political and obscuring larger contextual frameworks in which concrete violence(s) are effected.

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Article V
A Triad of Structural Violence

Abstract

Drawing from critical and radical interdisciplinary work on violence, I articulate a triad of distinguishable indexes of structural violence: infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence, and institutionalized structural violence. Focusing on infra/structural violence here, I lay out a geographical understanding of this violence as (i) spatially compounded, or compressing spatial and social worlds through compounding structural violence(s) in the same landscape and (ii) produced in a globalised geopolitical nexus by actors who are spatially nested within a racialised and gendered hierarchy of scale. As such, scale and space are essential to the production of structural violence. When we name the structural violence of neoliberal capitalist interchanges—and, in so doing, re-appropriate the modern capitalist state's monopoly on naming and defining violence—we mount a critique against it.

Keywords: triad of structural violence; infra/structural violence; politics of scale; geographies of violence

Introduction

Human lives are deeply affected by the global forces of market capitalism, “particularly at capitalist frontiers where accumulation is not so much primitive [...] as savage” (Tsing 2005: 27). The two communities where I lived for a seven-and-a-half month research project along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, Nanga-Eboko (or Nanga) and Kribi, Cameroon, are tied together by their proximity to an oil pipeline, their experiences of living in spaces of concurrent infrastructural material transformation, and the attendant processes of displacement, resettlement, and dispossession—all of which reflect a penetrating form of structural violence analogous to that theorized by John Galtung (1969). Structural violence is a theoretical framework employed to describe a diverse set of slowly unfolding violence(s)—manifested through violent transformations of lifescape(s) and landscape(s), including interconnected intensifications of preventable disease, mortality rates, and ecological destruction, predominantly in economically, politically, and socially disempowered and marginalized communities—prompted by

indirect and complex causative sequences that are embedded within the practices, policies, and procedures of the global capitalist economy.

Critics of the theory of structural violence have argued against the value of a large-scale systemic analysis of violence, arguing that the theory is “too broad” or “too ubiquitous” to be analytically useful (Wacquant 2013). One anonymous reviewer for an article that I wrote on structural violence along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, for example, nudged, “Where in Africa is structural violence *not* a problem?” Structural violence is not a problem for the people living and vacationing in the gated communities and resorts of elite African enclaves. The reviewer’s question, however, identifies a larger dissatisfaction among academics with the theory *precisely* because structural violence is so pervasive. This debate over the specific intellectual value (or ineffectualness) of a large-scale analysis of complex and variable manifestations of violence as structurally perpetuated seems to center on critics’ contentions that the analysis problematically groups fluctuating, uneven, and non-uniform manifestations of violence within the same theoretical umbrella *and* that these violence(s) are better comprehended (academically) in isolation or through discrete theoretical frameworks; or critics’ rejections of structural violence as a socio-political phenomenon because it is, by definition, built into the current global economic system, as such an understanding risks reaffirming structural violence as such, limiting resistance potentials against such an all-consuming force.

One way to address these concerns is to further clarify particular and distinct factors within manifestations of structural violence. Structural violence is not identical in every landscape or throughout all lifescapes, meaning that people are unevenly incorporated within processes of structural violence, often within the same landscape. As I illustrate elsewhere, this uneven incorporation fractures resistance potentials by

fostering disunity and suspicion within communities (Murrey 2015). Along these lines, we might begin to formulate a more nuanced analysis of structural violence as composed of a nexus or triad of interrelated and co-constituting forms: (i) infra/structural violence, (ii) industrial structural violence and (iii) institutionalized structural violence.

Infra/structural violence includes those, mostly large-scale, material infrastructural projects and programs that effect violence upon proximate lifescapes and landscapes. This is the most common type of structural violence in contemporary African societies and countries where industrialized and manufacturing sectors were never encouraged or were systematically destroyed (for example, the structural adjustment program of the 1980s destroyed state infrastructures across Africa) as well as the de-industrialized and non-gentrified inner cities of North America. Infra/structural violence is often manifested through an abundance of infrastructural projects (particularly ‘white elephant’ or resource extraction projects that actively disadvantage local people and places) and extractive projects, alongside a relative absence of adequate sewage treatment facilities, medical centers, electrical grids, clean waterways, and other pro-people infrastructures. As Hannah Appel (*italics* added, 2012: 458) argues in the case of Equatorial Guinea, “where its presence is possible, basic infrastructure’s *absence* is a form of violence.” Likewise, infra/structural violence is apparent in the impoverished and racially segregated neighborhoods of the global North: for example, the “food deserts” (a term used to describe the lack of available fresh produce, meat, and dairy foods alongside a plethora of high-fat and high-sugar, processed foods) of New Orleans, Chicago, Atlanta, and other urban areas; or the Detroit City Council’s suspension of clean water services to homes, schools and businesses, which predominantly affected black

residents, in 2014. Infra/structural violence includes both (i) the profusion of material infra/structurally violent projects that entail ecological destruction, dispossession, displacement, and/or exploitation and (ii) the *lack* of basic social infrastructure where its presence is urgently needed for community wellbeing, economically and politically feasible, and demanded by people.

Industrial structural violence, common throughout East and Southeast Asia as well as parts of Latin American and the Caribbean, is brought about as laborers and landscapes are incorporated into capitalist industrial production systems, often in a context of few organizational and work-place rights and limited environmental oversights, in the name of “economic progress.”

Institutionalized structural violence is the uneven, unequal, racialised, and gendered decision-making mechanisms and processes built into institutional structures, which prevent individuals from “achieving their full human potential” (Galtung 1969). This is the most common type of structural violence in the highly bureaucratic countries of Euro-America, where institutionalized structural violence is sometimes colloquially referred to as “the system” and is understood to be a form of oppression. Iris Marion Young’s (1990: 41) definition of oppression is useful:

Oppression... is structural, rather than the result of a few people’s choices or policies. Its causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules... In this extended structural sense oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms—in short, the normal processes of everyday life. We cannot eliminate this structural oppression by getting rid of the rulers or making some new laws, because oppressions are systematically reproduced in major economic, political, and cultural institutions.

Young continues to define five conditions of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and (direct or physical)

violence. To this list, I would add institutionalized structural violence. This violence manifests itself in the social, political, economic, and ideological hierarchies that situate people, often entire communities, within environments of enormous risk.

Importantly, actors whose decisions and actions combine with the actions, decisions, and behaviors of other actors—across spatial and temporal scales—produce this transecting triad of structural violence. Structural violence is the result of a system of actors who create, sustain, and act through an organizational hegemony, although the actors might be dissimilar in terms of power, goals, and connections to place (as I argue below, this dissimilarity and ostensible competition between actors *in* the system is an advantage to those same individual actors and institutions, who often displace blame upon one another within the system).

Using a triad of structural violence, we can see where scholarly contributions to the body of work on structural violence might fit, primarily but not exclusively, as *the triad often co-exists simultaneously within a topographical nexus of structural violence*. Paul Farmer's (1992; 2004) work on disease pathology in Haiti might fit within a framework of institutionalized structural violence; Rob Nixon's (2011) work on slow violence in African and Asian countries might be understood through a framework of infra/structural violence; Akhil Gupta's (2012) work on bureaucracy and poverty in India might be understood as institutionalized structural violence. There is no easy delineation, however, as the infra/structural violence of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, for example, arose within an already established institutionalized structural violence that informs patterns of economic exchange, which create infra/structural violence in Chad and Cameroon.

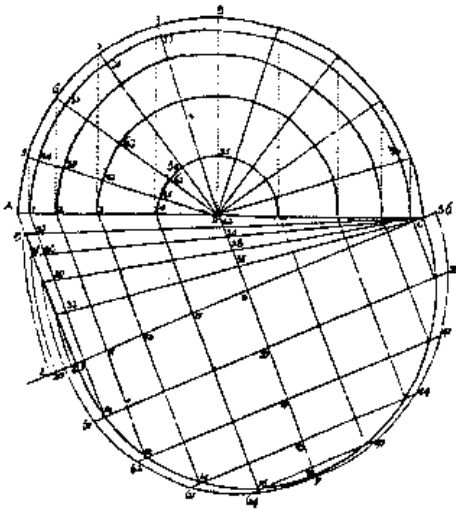


Figure 36. An imprecise topographical nexus of structural violence: each line—created and sustained by individual actors within institutions—represents one of the indexes of structural violence within the triad, creating a complex web or nexus of intersecting forms of structural violence.

Outline of arguments

Elsewhere I focus on narratives of structural violence within the communities of Kribi and Nanga-Eboko (Murrey forthcoming, a) and epistemologies through which power relationships and the unseen actions of the powerful are understood (Murrey forthcoming, b); here I address the spatial geopolitics of infra/structural violence as well as the particular and nested scalar interfaces of this violence. The arguments presented herein expand the conceptualization by drawing upon geographical notions of the “politics of scale” (Swyngedouw 2001; Daley 2007) in the organization of uneven power networks while positing a notion of violence as spatially compounded to describe the existence of multiple infra/structurally violent projects upon the landscape.

One mechanism that obfuscates nexuses of structural violence—infra/structural, industrial and institutionalized structural violence(s)—is the politics of scale. Structural violence is enacted through a “nested hierarchy of spatial scales” (Swyngedouw 2001: 133): outsourced, subcontracted and enacted at multiple scales—global, national, regional, local—by diffuse actors. The structural violence of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline unfolds within complex socio-economic and political

processes, including subcontracting and multilateral bureaucratic decision-making, through diffusely causal nexuses. The infra/structural violence of resource extraction is so pervasive, in part, because it is spatially nested within institutionalized and hierarchical geopolitical relationships. Its operators move within and without particular spaces that are devoid of spatial constraints through a set of strategies—emerging from capitalist calculations of “Profit versus Compliance Costs”—that work to disarm locally emerging resistance practices, often before they have even begun. The structural violence of present-day capitalism is based upon attempted destructions of spatial differences in a nexus of power that is organized hierarchically.

A second marker of structural violence is that it is compounded in both landscapes and lifescapes; this includes both the multitude of divergent arrangements of infra/structural violence within the same topographical configuration as well as simultaneous manifestations of both infra/structural and institutionalized violence side-by-side, for example. This marker is in part responsible for the seeming permanence of violence as a feature of contemporary global exchange patterns. Looking at the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline through the context of structural violence requires extending our vision beyond the oil pipeline in the communities studied. During conversations with people in Nanga and Kribi, people alluded to the similarities between concurrent structural violence(s) within their communities or during their lifetimes—for example, identifying similar operating practices of several transnational companies in the same places. In Nanga, the oil consortium's uneven land dispossession practices were mirrored a handful of years later by a Chinese for-export rice plantation, whose workstation was likewise fenced-in and closed off to the public.

These markers of structural violence are salient in the context of the academic debate over the relevance or accuracy of the concept: what is *lost*, I wonder, when we fail to consider multiple violence(s) side-by-side? Are non-systemic analyses of the indirect, slowly unfolding, mass violence(s) rooted in uneven economic and political systems “analytically strong” but “politically weakening” (by “politically weakening” I mean the risks inherent in isolating or fracturing experiences of violence within a landscape or lifescape in a way that potentially prohibits collective action based on those shared experiences)? How do our pedagogical approaches stifle an ability to “see” mutually existing institutionalized, industrial, and infra/structural violence as relevant when analyzed together because of their co-constituency and combined effects within collective experiences of modern-day capitalism? Revisiting these questions in the concluding section of the article, I argue that *naming* the structural violence of the global capitalist system provides indispensable common ground for mounting a critique against it.

Compounded in space

In March 2011, the government of Niger signed an agreement with the Chadian National Oil Company (TCOTCO) to pump crude oil through the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, a venture that involves extending the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline nearly 1,000 kilometers to the Agadem oil fields, east of Niamey. In 2013, the British company, Griffiths Energy International Inc., extended the pipeline right-of-way 111 kilometers to oil wells in Badila and Mangara in southern Chad. This gathering of pipelines is a standard operating procedure of major transport pipelines; in a process of ‘gas debottlenecking’ (i.e., facilitating profit or de-blocking obstacles to profit), new oil wells are nearly perpetually incorporated into the large transport pipeline via a complex networks of smaller pipelines. The Canadian corporation, Caracal Energy

Inc., recently negotiated a production-sharing contract with the Chadian government for oil in the Badila field and as of January 2014, this crude pumps through the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. At the same time, 36 kilometers of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is being re-routed to avoid submersion by the waters of the newly created reservoir of the World Bank-funded Lom Pangar Hydroelectric Dam Project, whose militarized worker camps—operated by China International Water and Electric Corp.—have been criticized by the Cameroon Network of Human Rights Organizations for labor violations (CWE “Clarification” 2014). This pipeline diversion project is being undertaken by the Italian oil and gas construction company, Sicim S. P. A.

REPORTAGE Le gouvernement camerounais a cédé des terres à une entreprise asiatique qui exploite des paysans locaux pour cultiver du riz destiné à la Chine. Un accaparement que certains habitants commencent à dénoncer.

Quand le Cameroun nourrit la Chine

Juché sur son bulldozer, Keman Essam a les larmes aux yeux. « Nous gagnons un salaire de misère et nous ne voyons même pas où passe le riz pour lequel nous monerons chaque jour », dit-il. Depuis quatre ans, cet homme travaille pour le compte d'une entreprise chinoise dans une exploitation proche de Nanga-Ebokoko, dans la Haute-Sanaga, région centrale du Cameroun. Il gagne 1 500 francs CFA par jour (environ 2,30 euros) pour huit heures de travail. « Si je ne suis pas augmenté d'ici à la fin de l'année, et si je n'ai pas de contrat de travail, je démissionne », promet-il. C'est au bord d'un large fleuve, la Sanaga, et au milieu d'une forêt dense que l'entreprise chinoise Iko s'est implantée en avril 2006. Les champs s'étendent à perte de vue. Des employés labourent la terre ocre à l'aide d'un petit tracteur pour préparer les prochaines semailles de riz, tandis que des maçons construisent châteaux d'eau et canaux qui permettront de pomper l'eau du fleuve pour irriguer la plantation et cultiver le riz en toute saison. Au milieu de la plantation, le directeur par intérim de la société dirige



Des terres non cultivées et une main-d'œuvre bon marché : un double avantage pour l'entreprise Iko. (L'ESPRESSO)

les opérations. On l'appelle monsieur Zhao. « Nous sommes très satisfaits, les variétés de riz que nous avons expérimentées ici s'adaptent parfaitement au climat et aux maladies », sourit-il. Combien de tonnes de riz sont récoltées ? « 10 tonnes à l'hectare », finit-il par lâcher, un peu agacé. Quant à la surface exploitée, difficile d'obtenir une estimation. M. Zhao annonce 100 hectares. Un chiffre qui ne convainc pas les villageois. « C'est beaucoup plus ! Toutes les terres qui

longent le fleuve appartiennent à Iko », explique Timothée Mhanga, habitant de Biogo, le village voisin. Nous n'avons même plus le droit de chasser là-bas ou de couper du bois. Ceux qui l'ont fait ont eu des ennuis avec

la gendarmerie. » Même le ministre de l'Agriculture dément le chiffre donné par monsieur Zhao. Madame Ketcha, qui suit le dossier, parle d'une surface de 6 000 hectares. Sur les conditions d'acquisition de ces terres, elle refuse de s'exprimer. La question est sensible. « En effet, c'est top secret », révèle Bernard Njonga, président de l'Association citoyenne de défense des intérêts citoyens (Aedci). Nous essayons d'avoir des informations sur les

conventions qui sont passées avec l'entreprise chinoise, mais il est impossible d'obtenir des réponses. Pour quelle raison ? Pourquoi les décisions ne sont-elles pas prises devant le Parlement ? « Dans son bureau de Yaoundé, il s'alarme d'un phénomène certes encore embryonnaire – mais

Figure 37. A 2010 Article in *The Cameroon Tribune*, titled, 'When Cameroon feeds China'. The image featured within the article shows workers clearing a field for rice cultivation near Nanga-Ebokoko, Cameroon. Source: *The Cameroon Tribune*.

In Cameroon, oil production is set to increase by 25 percent in 2014 with the addition of oil production from the Mvia offshore oil field in the Douala-Kribi-Campo Basin (National Hydrocarbons Corporation 2014). At the same time, two additional

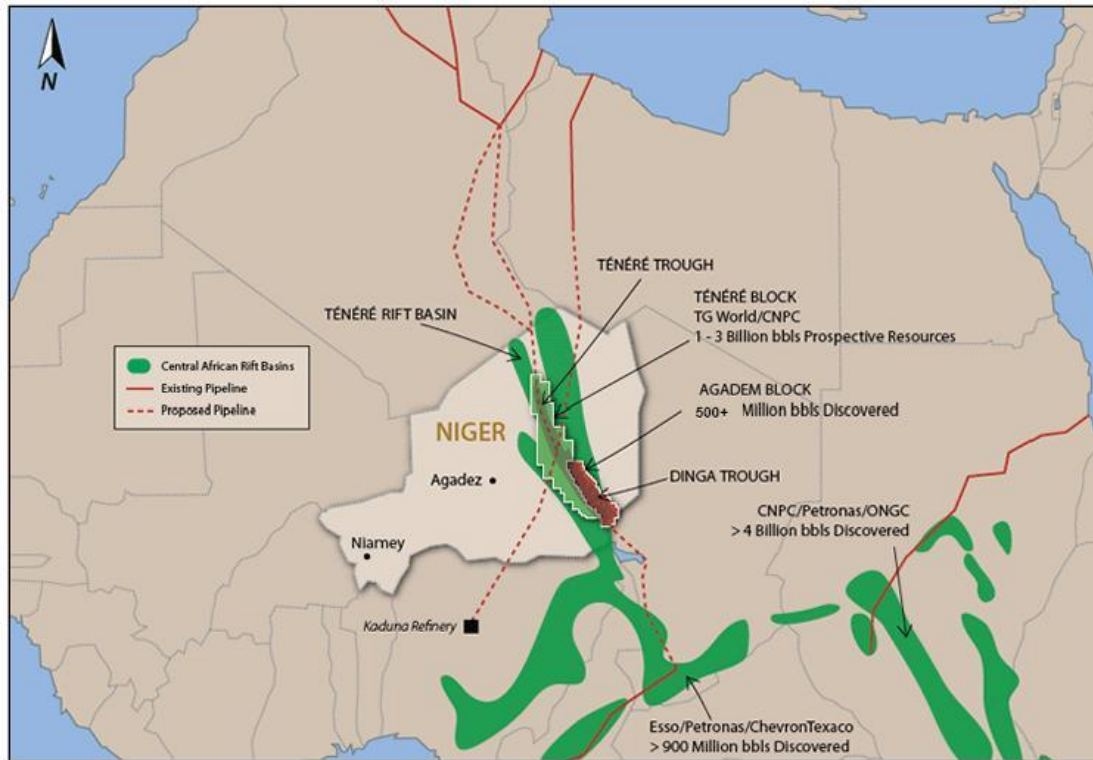


Figure 38. Map illustrating possible export options for Niger's oil; connection with the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline evident to the south. *Source:* Reuters Africa, www.af.reuters.com.

GRIFFITHS ENERGY BLOCKS IN SOUTHERN CHAD

FIG. 2

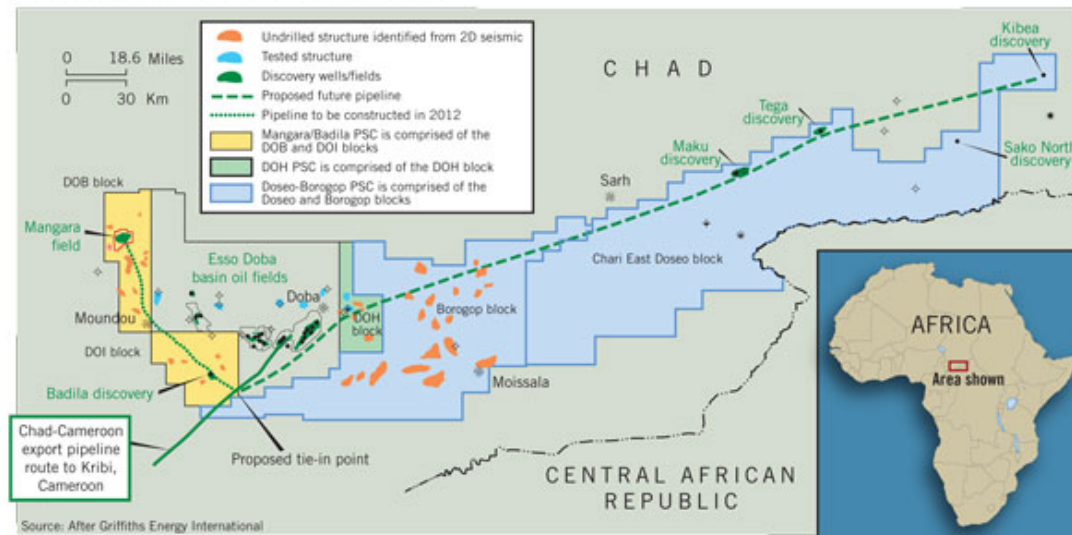


Figure 39. Extensions to the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline to access crude in southern Chad's Chari East Doseo and Bonogop blocks by Griffiths Energy International. *Source:* Griffiths Energy international.

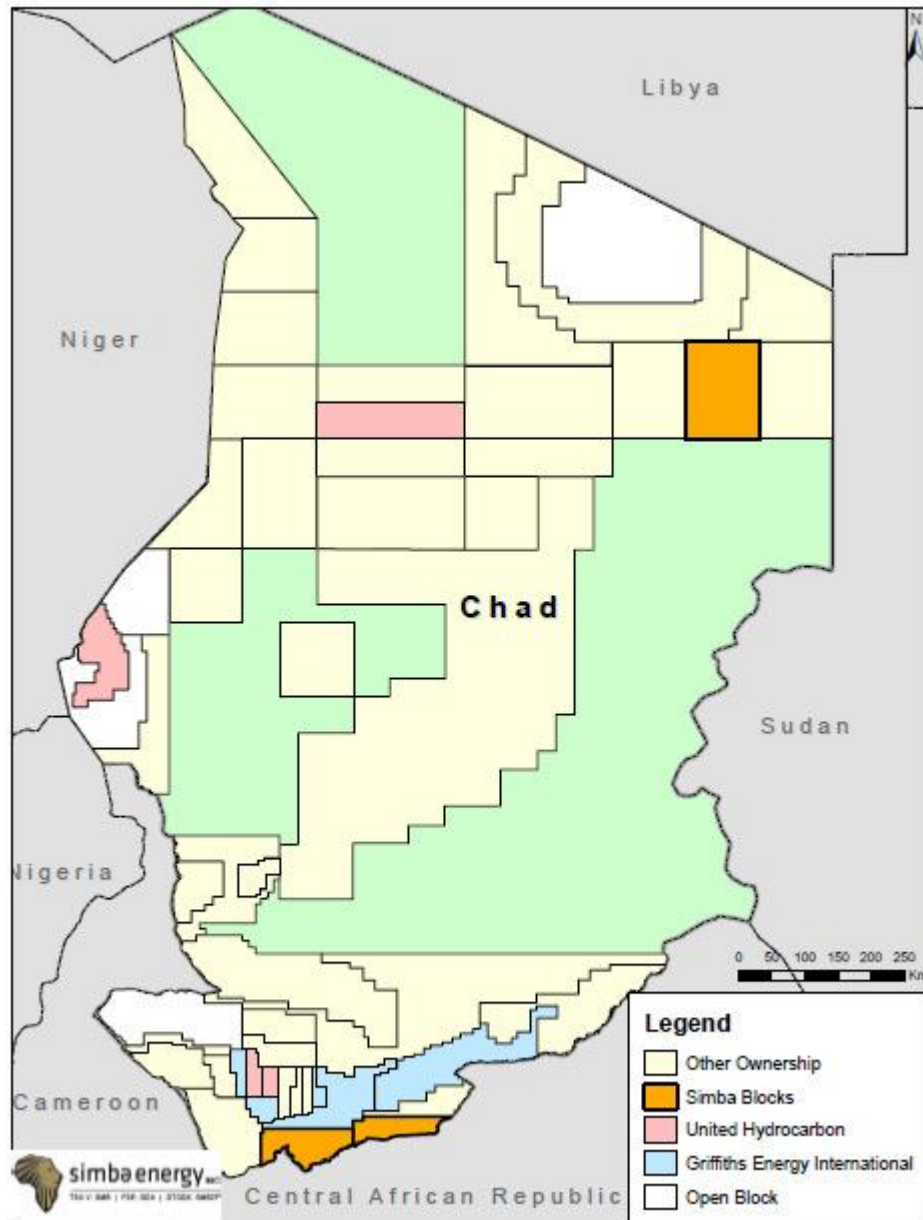


Figure 40. Topographical division of the country of Chad, indicating ownership of petroleum blocks. *Source:* Simba Energy.

oil pipelines are in pre-construction phase, including the 248 kilometer, Limbe-Douala-Edea-Yaoundé pipeline and the 377 kilometer, Limbe-Bafoussam-Bamenda oil pipeline, whose construction is supported and engineered by the US group, Govind Development, LLC. These simultaneously unfolding, spatially overlapping, transnationally networked oil extraction projects illustrate a small fraction of the spatial nesting of infra/structural violence in the domain of oil extraction.

Nanga and Kribi are situated within a complex system of concurrent international and national neoliberal extraction projects. In Kribi, land grabs are particularly high as palm oil, Del Monte banana plantations and rubber plantations continue to expand in size (Country Report on Food, Cameroon: 2010). Large commercial plantations continue to displace communities from their lands in Kribi, Nanga-Eboko and Ngalaba. A Chinese multinational, Shaanxi Land Reclamation General Corporation (also known as Shaanxi State Farm or by its Cameroonian subsidiary, Sino-Cam), obtained a 99-year lease for 10,000 hectares of productive land in Nanga-Eboko and the surrounding villages in 2010 (Gouin et Tagne 2010). This land is now used to produce rice, maize and cassava, primarily for export to Asia (Gouin et Tagne 2010). This, despite the fact that Cameroon imports significant quantities of rice and maize since the 1980s and there is a clear comparative advantage to producing them for domestic consumption (Country Report on Food, Cameroon: 2010). A Cameroonian organization, the *Association for the Defense of Collective Interests* (ACDIC) says all of the company's permanent staffers are Chinese and that the land had been previously used by village members for subsistence farming (Devine 2010). Major agro-industrial enterprises have been privatized in the Doba basin in southern Chad since the 1980s, mostly by French cotton companies (Haroun 2008).

Structural violence compresses both spatial and social worlds. The spatial restructurings along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline connect with broader geopolitical struggles over the “dynamics of capital accumulation” both within the region and on a global scale (Harvey 2006: 111). A holistic and multidimensional approach that considers simultaneous and interrelated forms of infra/structural and institutionalized structural violence in Cameroonian communities is necessary to

grasp the multi-spatial and multifarious nature of infra/structural violence, where violence is evidenced in both the material destruction effected by the pipeline as well as the material vacuum of what remains undone. In this case, this vacuum includes the electrical grids not expanded nor erected, the subterranean aquifers that were destroyed during pipeline construction and that remain un-replaced as well as the oil consortium's assurances to provide infrastructure in support of local education, when these promises were manifested in little more than empty one-room buildings.

The privatization of electricity in Cameroon began in 2001, through a concession agreement blueprinted by the World Bank, in which the public service sector, Société Nationale d'Electricité (Sonel), was purchased by the American Electricity Supply Corporation (AES). The mismanagement of distribution by AES-Sonel, alongside a grid system developed in 1976, resulted in failure and inadequate access to electricity for the majority of the population; AES-Sonel was acquired by the British Investment Fund, Actis, in 2014.



Figure 50. Satellite image of Pump Reduction Station outside Kribi. Blue arrow indicates the non-electrified village of Mpango. Red arrows indicate the Pipeline Pump Reduction Station. *Source:* Google Earth.

When asked, ‘What did you hope for through the pipeline project?’ people in

Nanga and Kribi predominantly indicated a desire for electrification and sustainable employment opportunities. Yet no part of the pipeline's development project included an expansion of Cameroon's electrical system and less than 25 percent of Cameroon is electrified, with rural areas in particular having little electrification. Cameroon is prone to cycles of cutoff and rolling blackouts, both spontaneous (due to electrical malfunctions and natural mischances) and planned (for repair or due to shortages, particularly in the dry season when hydroelectric dams operate lower reservoirs), but people are more negatively affected than industry, as is the case in industrialized structural violence. For example, the ExxonMobil oil facility in Chad produces six times more electricity than what is consumed by the rest of the country; so much so that activists have remarked upon the "stark contrast between the well-lit oil facilities and the darkened neighboring towns and villages" (2004 International Advisory Group, qtd. in Pegg 2006: 18). Meter tampering, the practice of splicing wires to steal electricity from nearby lines, is a common and dangerous practice in landscapes of uneven access to infrastructure. Tampering can result in electrocution if wires are improperly crossed. In this context, there is considerable media attention given to the potential of hydroelectric power generation.

One of the latest projects is the Lom Pangar Hydroelectric Dam, financed by the World Bank, the China International Water and Electric Corporation and the French-Canadian aluminum smelting company Alucam. The dam will involve the construction of a 45 meter-high reservoir dam in Cameroon's East Province, submerging two portions of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline and potentially displacing people in communities previously displaced in 2000 and 2002 by the construction of the pipeline in the outer regions of Pangar. The French Canadian Alucam currently consumes approximately half of all electrical power sold in

Cameroon, and has arranged for rights of 200 megawatts of additional electricity through the Lom Pangar Dam, at rates far lower than commercial and residential rates (International Rivers 2005). Multi-scalar exploitations are compounded through the unfolding of numerous violent effects (as one manifestation of structural violence, such as the pipeline, produces a multitude of violent consequences); these multiple consequences are compounded by additional structural violence(s) that affect the same landscape, as well as the lifescapes within those landscapes.



Figure 51. Employees at Nanga's bus station take payments and hand out tickets by candlelight during a power outage.

The Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline earned 277.6 million USD for the government of Cameroon in seven years; in 2010, the World Bank accepted that, “in reality, close to 50 percent of expenditures has gone to the military.” This increased military spending occurred alongside the increasing support of Chadian and Cameroonian militaries by the US government through anti-terrorism funding and training

(Taguem-Fah 2007). This increased militarism reinforces authoritarianism and accelerates the intensification of poverty for Chadian and Cameroonian people. Militarized African governments exercise powerful tools of force against all manner of protest, including pro-democracy and peaceful strikes, which are subsumed within an anti-terrorist catchall (Campbell and Murrey 2014). Bolstering the militarization of society reduces the space for expressions of dissent, while increasing the risks and dangers of publicly expressing dissatisfaction.

Structural violence & the politics of scale

One of the markers of structural violence is the lack of a directly identifiable agent that commits the violence. Instead, the violence is spatially nested and results from intricately intersecting, ramified, and cyclical interactions of multiple actors across several temporal and spatial scales, which are built into the daily operations of the globalized, racialized, and gendered modern colonial world system (Quijano 2000; Galtung 1969; Farmer 2004; Nixon 2011). Structural violence is enacted and perpetuated, in part, through this division, subdivision, subcontracting, and splicing of actors and actions across regional, national and international scales. This hierarchical nesting of actors and other division-fostering strategies fit within pre-existing structures of governance, including the cultivation of political and ethnic division between Cameroonians by the DRPC ruling party in Cameroon (Namanjoh et al. 2000); the use of subcontractors and private firms as shadow actors within the global capitalist economy; the often rigidly hierarchical bureaucratization of decision making within institutions like the World Bank (Goldman 2005); and the use of non-contractual, temporary, and masculinized labor (the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline almost exclusively employed men) to fracture the potential for organizing at the local

level. The fracturing of the processes and actors that enact forms of structural violence seem to result in a complex attendant fracturing of resistance within places characterized by high levels of structural forms of oppression, such as Nanga and Kribi.



Figure 52. Satellite image of Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline base camp near Doba, southern Chad. *Source:* Google Earth.

A multitude of corporate and political interests convene and intervene in the “local” spaces of Cameroon and Chad, where the economic impetus for raw materials and commodities is apparent in the large-scale dispossession of land and resources in both countries and the pipeline is one of many such projects that dispossess people on a large-scale. The structural violence of resource extraction is so successful as to be characterized as pervasive because it is spatially nested in particular geopolitical relationships; its operators move within and without of particular spaces devoid of spatial constraints. These spatial scales are deeply intertwined (“nested”) but are also “partially hierarchical” and, importantly, the “mobilization of scalar narratives, scalar politics, and scalar practices... becomes an integral part of political power struggles and strategies” (Swyngedouw 2001: 133-4). Because of their positioning within the nested hierarchy, hegemonic actors are insulated and protected by discursive and

geographical distancing techniques that effect a displacement of blame.

This displacement of blame is evident through the World Bank's role in the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. In September 2008, the World Bank released a statement that "end[ed] the Bank's involvement with the project," naming Chad's failure to comply with key requirements of the pipeline agreement as the impetus for its withdrawal (WB No. 2009/073/AFR). The Chadian government failed to allocate any significant amount of oil profit to poverty reduction efforts in the form of education, health, infrastructure, or rural development. After discussions in N'Djamena during the week of 25 August 2008, between World Bank officials and members of the Chadian Government, the government agreed to prepay the World Bank for pipeline-related financing and the World Bank withdrew from the project shortly after receiving the final payment.

The agreement for an early debt-repayment plan between Chad and the World Bank poses troubling questions about the nature of the Bank's involvement in the project. The Bank's decision to withdraw from the project signaled the "failure" of the project to deliver on promises of "development" and "poverty eradication." The Bank had promoted the development potentialities of the capital-intensive project and yet the project exacerbated inequalities in affected regions (Endeley and Sikod 2007; Endeley 2010; Schwartz and Nodem 2009). The Bank utilizes the politics of scale to displace blame upon other actors in the system, as a means of absolving itself from any blame for the present hardships engendered by the project. By positing the Chadian government as insufficient and incapable of managing project funds in a socially progressive manner, the Bank deflects blame for these shortcomings. Five years later, during the 2013 World Bank and IMF Annual "Spring" Meetings in

Washington DC, Delphine Djiraibe,¹ a Chadian human rights lawyer, asked the current World Bank President and anthropologist, Jim Yong Kim, what the Bank had learned from the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline (one of the Bank's most controversial projects in Africa of the preceding decade): Kim had never heard of the project (Medallo 2013).

The work of Claude Ake (1996) is insightful in illustrating the ways in which development paradigms often have very little to do with any actual on-the-ground development. Ake theorizes that development paradigms are often “conveniently abstract” and that their abstraction allows financial stakeholders to posit the blame for failed projects on local governments (Ake 1996: 17). He writes, such projects pay ‘little heed to historical specificity’ and treat the ‘development process as something in no way connected to its cultural, institutional, and political context’ (Ake 1996: 17). “This position,” he explains, “is self-serving”: “For the external patrons of the development paradigm, its abstract universalism allowed them to package their experience as universal and objectively necessary” (Ake 1996: 17). By speaking of the pipeline project as having potential to serve as a case study in the potential of oil-as-development, the World Bank positioned the scope of analysis to an abstract ideal. In this way, the Bank failed to take into account the real logistical limitations of implementing the project in Chad and Cameroon.

Actors within systems of structural violence have historically exercised the nesting of powerful actors to their benefit, to ensure the continuation of the system. In the realm of oil, this has been evident in the historical use of middlemen or fixers: these are mostly men who act as go-betweens for corporations that have interests in exploiting a resource and the national leaders who determine the rights to the

¹ Djiraibe's work and activism is discussed in *Article IV: The Right to the Rural?*

resource. Middlemen have played imperative roles in shaping the global energy industry,

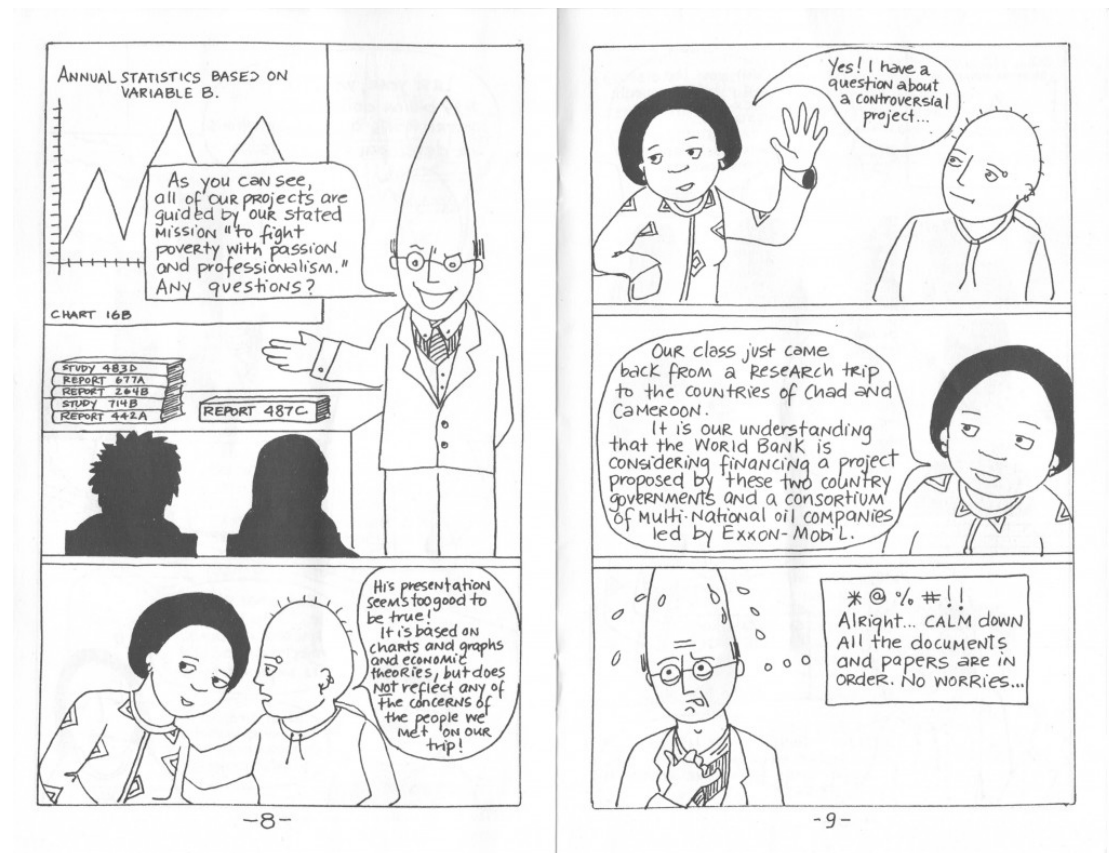


Figure 53. An educational comic strip on the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline titled, *The World Bank: Undermining Local People, Enriching Global Elites*. Source: Clark, D., Djiraibe, D., Thenard, E. & Valeska and illustrated by Valeska. Alexandria, VA: Weadon Printing and Communications, 2000.

although this role has become increasingly complex since the United States expanded its anti-bribery laws in December 1977, through the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). The FCPA outlaws personal payments or rewards designed to influence companies, government officials, political parties or other individuals abroad. A former ExxonMobil executive in Angola explains, for example: "I spent 99 percent of my time trying to figure out ways to not technically violate the FCPA" (qtd. in Silverstein 2014: 27). When before direct bribes between corporate representatives and national leaders were used to safeguard cheap resource extraction at enormous local social and ecological costs, the evolved technique is for the transnational

corporation to engage in “business” with a local company that is owned by a national actor with power to ensure the deal goes through, often a president or oil minister (Silverstein 2014). This might entail agreeing to purchase a product, property, or stock at several times its value; the bribe is legally concealed within the surplus price and the system remains in place.

The infra/structural violence of the pipeline (exposure to illness and death through ecological destruction, water contamination, loss of livelihood, among others) is the result of complicated and highly obscured interactions between multiple actors—individual, corporate, and institutional. The violence is not immediately attributable to an acting subject but is built into the structure of the operations of the oil consortium and the global political economy dependent upon oil, including the vertical power relations organized hierarchically: corporate entities, including ExxonMobil and the World Bank, exercise power over national governments, which are more powerful than regional and local communities. Adding to the mix of actors are the subcontracting companies (such as Dames & Moore, an engineering, design, and construction firm and a US federal government contractor) involved in managing the labor sector, construction, and engineering. This division of actors includes the national oil management companies, COTCO and TOTCO, which play an important role in diffusing the visibility, on a local scale, of the transnational oil corporations. During our conversations, people routinely speculated on the agent responsible for the violence and, in fact, the Bank, ExxonMobil, Chevron and Petronas were not mentioned in even one discussion.² People debated, instead, the roles of local, regional, and national actors as well as subcontractors.

² Elf Aquitaine (now Total) and Royal Dutch Shell withdrew from the project in 1999. The withdrawal of Shell came as the company was under heavy international criticism for their complicity in the arrest and summary execution of nine activists from the

The structural violence of contemporary capitalism is partially dependent upon sustained efforts to destruct spatial differences through a nexus of power that is spatially nested; in this way, scale and place are essential to the production of structural violence. The operations of structural violence are manifested through neoliberal ideologies and processes, capitalist market-driven globalization and the infrastructure of capitalist enterprise, such as the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. Individual projects which produce new forms of structural violence profit from the existence of that system in their ability to displace blame onto other hegemonic powers within the system: if we cannot scientifically connect soil degradation to the oil pipeline because it is a combination of several simultaneously and unevenly converging projects or factors—one institutional actor is not to “blame.” Hegemonic powers are adept at shuffling blame—either between themselves or to the people on the ground.

Conclusion

Human geographers argue that materials are deeply implicated in political processes, so much so that materials have political agency; nowhere is this more evident than through the material politics of oil (Barry 2013). If “democracy [is] oil”—as illustrated by Timothy Mitchell’s (2011) analysis of the historical development of the American democratic system as contingent upon the extraction of vast quantities of oil and the techno-social products from long-term, large-scale oil

Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in the Ogoni region of Nigeria in the Niger Delta. The Ogoni Nine, as they came to be called, included Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gboko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuata, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel and John Kpuine. Shell was under suit in 1996 by the Center for Constitutional Rights for its role in the executions. Elf was likewise trying to improve its own image following the revelation (in 1994) that Elf executives had been involved in fraud and had spent \$200 million USD for non-business related items, including bribes, mistresses, fine art, villas and apartments.

exploitation—serious questions about global social justice and empowerment in an oil economy have no easy answers. Similarly, the technological advances of the industrial revolution, including the foundations of social welfare systems through intricate taxation systems, came to fruition through an expansive international system of forced and precarious labor and resource exploitation. Mitchell (2011: 5) provocatively challenges conventional notions of democracy as multi-party systems based on popular selection through voting, asserting instead that democracy is “a form of politics whose mechanisms on multiple levels involve the processes of producing and using carbon energy.” In this geopolitical context, the “freedoms” integral to American democracy *require* the sustained exploitation of this finite resource through elaborate structural, infrastructural, social, and political systems, despite enormous global ecological-human devastation. Paul Farmer (2004) forcefully explores the complicity of middle and upper class Americans, for example, in maintaining the system of structural violence.

Indeed, the intellectual project of articulating, mapping, and documenting structural violence is often coupled with the political project of countering and combating the system, although the tendency within this paradigm has been to problematically script structural violence as an invisible phenomenon that needs to be exposed, while it is far from invisible (Murrey forthcoming, a). The task of countering structural violence entails producing pedagogies and praxes against “those socio-spatial practices that permit, facilitate, and legitimate violence” (Tyner 2012: 23). There is potential within the articulation of a holistic framework of structural violence to mount a critique—but how to move *beyond* critique?

Unfortunately, in spite of the strong criticism built into the theory, enough has not been said or written on developing alternatives to structural violence. There is a

rich body of literature on alternatives to capitalism, including but not limited to socialism, localism, communalism, and anarchy—these projects can be usefully merged in important ways to develop alternative avenues of social, political, and economic exchange. S. Ravi Rajan (2001: 398), for example, argues in the case of the Bhopal Gas Disaster that human rights must be extended “to include the right to live in nonviolent environments [and that] such an extension is extremely important if the issues of corporate and distributive violence are to be meaningfully addressed.” At the same time, we do not want to overstate the power of our scholarship. Indeed, I agree with Rajan’s (2001) association of scholars’ claims of needing to (or being able to) transform lives or spaces through scholarship and evangelical proselytizing. Instead of imagining the academic project as one to reveal structural violence to cultivate resistance against it, the academic project is to consider the intricate ways in which people already formulate understandings and mount resistances.

There is potential in efforts to re-establish the relationship of African people with their state (Mamdani 1996; McFadden 2008) to ensure more people-centric policies and decision-making; such projects are troubled, however, by the continued hegemony of the World Bank and the IMF in influencing—if not outright determining—economic and social policies (for example, the contested announcement in 2014 that Cameroon would remove fuel subsidies, effectively raising the costs of transpiration for Cameroonians, which came after several years of pressure from the IMF to cut the subsidy to reduce government spending for ‘debt management’). When this relationship continues to be mitigated by debt relief stipulations and debt repayment measures, African governments lack the political and economic sovereignty to re-establish a state that engages with and works to ensure people’s

wellbeing.³ A new relationship between the state and the people will come from pressure, often at the grassroots, exerted by the people onto political leaders to reshape institutions and infrastructures.

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³ Between 10 July 1963 and 2004, the World Bank Group has funded 45 loans, 39 credits, and 25 investments, and 8 trust fund projects for Cameroon (World Bank 2004). As of 2004, 'the original principle has totaled \$2,618,641,993. Of this amount, \$1,994,576,147 has been disbursed and \$331,475,468 has been cancelled. \$927,463,422 has been repaid, and \$979,491,193 remains due' (World Bank n.p. 2004).

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On Seeing, Knowing, Sensing and Narrating Violence: Reflections on the 'Invisibility' of Structural Violence

Abstract

I interrogate the contention, posited by scholar-activists, that structural violence is mostly invisible and the concomitant argument that the task of the scholar is to "render visible" structural violence (as means of consciousness raising or initiating political awareness and economic restructuring). I approach the topic through a discussion of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, emphasizing the ways in which the structural violence effected by the pipeline is acutely visible in particular ways to local people, despite the actions and actors of perpetrators being out-of-sight. I reflect on the implications of epistemologies that do not give central importance to the (strictly) visible as a means of re-conceptualising how scholar-activists might approach structural violence: How might we give equal credence to the visible and the invisible? What implications do such efforts have for resistance practices in places affected by structural violence?

Keywords: spatial disciplining; structural violence; politics of invisibility; scholar-activist

We are also looking at our observers... we too are looking, we too are scrutinizing, assessing, judging. We are more than someone's object. We do more than stand passively in front of whoever, for whatever reason, has wanted to look at us.

Edward Said, *After the last sky*, 1998

Debating the notion that structural violence is 'invisible'

In spaces characterised by high levels of structural violence, violence 'happens within complex structures and at the end of the long, highly ramified causal chains and cycles' and the complexity of these relationships and processes obscures the actors and mechanisms that create social and ecological suffering, so much so that structural violence is often not identified as a form of violence (Galtung 1999: 39). Structural violence is so deeply rooted in the practices, functions and history of capitalist economic exchange and neoliberal globalisation that it *appears* (but is not) abstract or even arbitrary, without perpetrators or identifiable actors. Compounding the obscurity of structural violence is (i) the historical longevity of high levels of social suffering as a result of systemic economic and political accumulation practices (a

longevity that normalises immense suffering that occurs everyday) and (ii) the ideological influence of what Johan Galtung calls cultural violence, or the socio-cultural belief systems that shroud the lived realities of social inequality with alienating and disconnecting discourses that ‘justify or legitimize direct or structural violence’ (Galtung 1999: 39). In this way, structural violence remains unrecognised through the discursive production of symbolic (Žižek 2009) or cultural (Galtung 1969) violence, in which hegemonic discourse limits the ability to ‘see’ the structure and actors, actions and processes that create and sustain unequal social realities.

Arising from this definitional understanding—of structural violence as being obscured within the convoluted machinations of the fabric of the global capitalist political economy—is a body of scholarship on structural violence that seeks to compel scholars, activists, and artists to articulate or render visible the processes, actors and effects of the violence as a means to combat it. Which leads me to a final question: as scholars we have the responsibility to make violence visible, in what ways and to whom? According to whose gaze?

Rob Nixon’s (2011) insightful and rich analysis, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, for example, uses nonfictional works of environmental writer-activists from the global South as a means of rendering visible the slowly unfolding structural violence of preventable environmental disasters, what he refers to as those ‘certain forms of violence that are imperceptible’ (Nixon 2012: 10). He writes,

How do we bring home—and bring emotionally to life—threats that take time to wreak their havoc, threats that never materialize in one spectacular, explosive, cinematic scene? *Apprehension* is a critical word here, a crossover term that draws together the domains of perception, emotion, and action. To engage slow violence is to confront layered predicaments of apprehension: to apprehend—to arrest, or at least mitigate—often imperceptible threats requires rendering them apprehensible to the senses through the work of scientific and imaginative testimony (Nixon 2012: 14).

Although not explicitly named, the implicit target audience for scholars and activists has remained a global, educated, technologically savvy audience with an amount of leisure time and political empowerment. This audience is the same identified by Paul Farmer (2004) as profiting from structural violence; they are also those who have access to legislative and consumptive power, who might potentially exert pressure to alter the policies of the nations and companies most responsible for structural violence. Akhil Gupta (2013: 21) reiterates, ‘One must keep in mind that certain classes of people have a stake in perpetuating a social order in which such extreme suffering is not only tolerated but also taken as normal’.

The notion in academia that it is imperative for scholars, activists and/or artists to bring structural violence into view in order for us to ‘change the system’ misses out on other ways in which this violence is already understood in communities living in their midst. Certainly, it seems implausible to argue that structural violence is invisible to those living and struggling within such confines although they might lack a detailed comprehension of the actors, processes and policies that created the violence (as this analysis has shown however, an epistemology that respects the visible and invisible equally is infinitely capable of criticising invisible forces). So that while structural violence is rendered ‘banal’ or is normalised in the public consciousness of privileged communities—as demonstrated in Farmer’s (2004: 309-11) analysis of recommendations for how to hold a proper bourgeoisie dinner party in the first modern cookbook published in 1779, against the backdrop of France’s most important colony, Haiti—structural violence is experienced acutely in high levels of social and ecological suffering that have never been invisible. While theorists of structural violence have emphasised its invisibility and the subsequent need to render it visible (Farmer 2004; Nixon 2011), anti-colonial, postcolonial and decolonial

scholars have exposed colonialism's 'bewilderers' (Fanon 1963) and the symbolic violence that underpin colonial and imperial projects (Said 1978). Structural violence includes the racialised, gendered and classed violence built into the daily operations of globalised capitalism that are, albeit normalised and cloaked through colonial discourse, by no means unseen, banal or normal in their effects. Ralph Ellison's (1952) 'invisible man', Toni Morrison famously commented, was never invisible to her. In my concluding thoughts presented herein, I apply a similar critique to the theory of structural violence, foregrounding its political and analytical relevance but revealing its problematic roots in a Eurocentric favouring of the visible and of the spectacle that does not account for non-western, non-dominant and non-capitalist (diverse and plural) epistemologies, such as *la sorcellerie* in Cameroon. Structural violence is better characterised as acutely visible.

This argument is an important addition to the literature as it distances the discussion from the tendency towards a 'moral rationale' that posits those who benefit the most from a nexus of structural violence as either bystanders (a way of thinking that absolves them of responsibility) or as *the* group with the power and capacity to transform the system, through some form of benevolence or empathy and, as a result, inadvertently strips agency from those who live in spaces and places of high levels of structural violence by playing into the empowerment of the privileged. Instead of positioning the discourse within a framework that envisions structural violence as unseen, we might look at this 'invisibility' as more resembling wilful blindness (particularly in institutions and corporations), against which a more useful approach is the insistence on seeing and feeling (including the refusal to endorse the academic privileging of emotional distance through 'unfeeling' analysis) and a determination not to endorse the normalisation of highly visible suffering.

What is more, the concept of *total* visibility is an anathema. As in Cameroonian epistemologies of la sorcellerie, the visible and the invisible are equally important in structuring and informing (senses of) the world. This perceived prerequisite to expose the unseen qualities of structural violence—rooted in scientism, where phenomena and experiences that cannot be measured or observed are unknowable—inadvertently contributes to corporate-led governance (including Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR) and corporate-sponsored initiatives for transparency. In such initiatives, promises of voluntary full visibility seek to pacify critique and resistance efforts, despite contradictions inherent in such efforts, which render *certain* knowledges transparent to *selective* audiences, while adeptly obscuring other information. At the same, major corporations expand their public profiles and ‘humanitarian’ efforts to combat and discredit knowledge and narratives that are critical of corporate violence. As Philippe le Billion (2007: 138) comments on media awareness campaigns regarding blood diamonds, ‘publically exposing the links between diamonds and violence was one thing, but curtailing them was (and remains) another’. There is no direct or natural connection between raising awareness of forms of structural violence (often problematically reductive and therefore discursively violent in their reduction of people to victims in simplified scenarios, as I discuss below) and the destruction, or even the reduction, of this violence. Moreover, in the digital age, discursive control operates more and more through over-information, as increasing amounts of information is available and as corporations expand into ever-greater public domains—ExxonMobil, for example, has a YouTube Channel, a blog and a Twitter feed—spectators are charged with the task of locating truthfulness amidst often-contradictory sound bites.

Positioning our political-intellectual project on this foundational struggle

condemns us to its perpetuation ad infinitum: the actors and actions of structural violence occur within complex spatial hierarchies—resistance actions cannot be precluded by this inherent obscurity. Just as Franz Fanon (1961) demonstrated that colonialism constructed a world through ‘a stock of falsehoods and the weight of fantasizing functions’, so much so that ‘colonization never ceased telling lies about itself and others’ (Mbembe 2009: 33), so it is with the structural violence of contemporary globalized capitalism. Arturo Escobar (2004: 3) argues that, ‘reality has been colonized’: the ‘inhumanity of the US-led Empire continues to be most patently visible in what until recently was called the Third World’. A decolonial engagement with structural violence affirms that this violence was *never invisible*. This is modernity’s underside, or, ‘those subaltern knowledges and cultural practices worldwide that modernity itself shunned, suppressed, made invisible and disqualified. Understood as “coloniality,” this other side has existed side by side with modernity since the Conquest of America’ (Escobar 2004: 3). The visible/invisible debate legitimises corporate power and marginalises worldviews and ways of living otherwise, outside and against the nexus of structural violence.

Surveillance and the visible along the pipeline: image campaigns and mirages

So geographers in Afric(an) maps
With savage pictures fills the gaps
And oe'er uninhabitable downs
Placed elephants for want of towns

Jonathan Swift, *On Poetry, A Rapsody*

The Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline is buried three feet under the ground, but it is not invisible to people living alongside it, who cultivate atop it and who walk across it daily. The destruction of much of the physical proof of the pipeline rendered the

pipeline invisible to those who had not experienced it first-hand. Indeed during my first week in a village along the pipeline I often struggled to even locate it and finding local maps tracing its route is nearly impossible. This obscuring of the physical evidence of the project alludes to tactics of evasion that sought to render the pipeline invisible and therefore not responsible for its attendant violence.



Figure 54. A security guard stands vigilant near an oil well in Ngalaba, southern Chad. *Source:* Jacob Silberg/Panos, for the New York Times.

The discursive practices of the oil consortium, governments of Chad and Cameroon, and the loan agencies, most importantly the World Bank, promoted the project as a ‘development’ project and an anti-poverty mechanism, effectively hiding the lived realities of inequality, abandonment and despair that accompanied the pipeline. This development discourse holds no truth to local experiences and yet it comprises the single largest justification and legitimation for the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline. The vast temporal and spatial scales of structural violence, working in tandem with this symbolic violence, work to normalise and conceal the divisive underlying matrix of social relations and processes that create and sustain the system of violence. Nixon (2012: 153) explains, ‘development projects of this scale enact ‘a war against presence, as inhabitants drop off official maps and plummet into zones of invisibility’.

Anthropologists and geographers have traced the rise of the resource enclave

phenomena, in which spaces of resource extraction are developed and secured amidst a wider topography of poverty and abandonment (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Ferguson 2005). Within such spaces, repressive technologies and armed security forces are deployed to secure resource extraction and capital investments, creating a ‘surveillance culture’ that renders the people and places of resource extraction highly visible (Nixon 2012). Along the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, ExxonMobil’s Global Security team—composed of retired military personnel and former police—established an Intelligence-Collection Operation distinct from and, as Steve Coll (2012: 352) observes, ‘better sourced’ than that of the Central Intelligence Agency station in the neighbouring US Embassy. ExxonMobil’s Global Security team ‘continually planned, mapped, and exercised evacuation routes into Cameroon [from Chad] by road and air’ in the event of a political or ecological emergency (Coll 2012: 353). Indeed, in Nanga, people told me that they see helicopters pass constantly along the pipeline’s route and that if someone clears vegetation along the pipeline that person will be ‘located immediately’ and ‘interrogated’ by the men in the helicopters.

Similarly, in Mpango outside Kribi, André described his feeling of living alongside the Kribi work station,

We have the impression that in the very near future we won’t even be able to pass nearby [the pipeline]... Look first at all the battalion of security that keeps us out of the worksite! Their security is like a military base. If they see you approaching they call out to stop you and demand that you change your route. If you refuse to change your path, there will be a problem. We know everything is surveyed by satellite and they can say that so and so was here at this time, doing this. One of their vigils who was fired—this was four or five years ago—told us that everything that goes on in the village is surveyed 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the pipeline.



Figure 55. A
COTCO
security guard,
standing in
front of the
pipeline valve
station near
Nanga.

Five months earlier and approximately 450 kilometres away, ten people in the small village of Nginda (near Nanga) gathered with precisely and preciously guarded pipeline documents, to discuss life along the pipeline route. They reaffirmed André's fear of constant surveillance with the story of a local man who had attempted to steal some metal from the nearby COTCO station; he was immediately contacted and told to come back and bring what he hid in the forest. The group informed me that COTCO is aware of nearly everything along the pipeline through satellite surveillance. The man who had taken the scrap metal presumably fled the village to avoid arrest and has not been seen since. Here we see how hyper-surveillance of people and places in zones of extraction is a disciplining technique that cultivates an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts (2001: 7) further explain that these tactics of surveillance and compliance are 'made stronger by the ways in which they are hidden from particular points of view'. As powerful perpetrators of structural violence and their acts are hidden through intricate distancing mechanism, the people and places caught in a nexus of structural violence are exposed, monitored and surveyed through mechanisms of control.

I have outlined this inequality within the politics of visibility along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline here as a means of troubling the notion that the more knowledge that a person or an institution has of a community, the less likely that person or institution will perpetuate harm against that community. Instead, large-scale knowledge acquisition projects—like Exxon's Intelligence-Collection Operation in Chad and Cameroon or the US Department of Defense (DOD) Joint Vision 2020's 'culture-centric warfare', in which 'the [total] knowledge of a [potential] enemy's social and cultural behaviour, beliefs, motivations and methodologies is viewed as increasingly essential to determining military strategy' (Campbell and Murrey 2014:

1465)—remain integral components of the operations of domination, exploitation and structural violence.

Hyper visibility or invisibility? On palpable pain and visible suffering

Prospero, you are the master of illusion.
Lying is your trademark.
And you have lied so much to me
(lied about the world, lied about me)
that you have ended by imposing on me
an image of myself.
underdeveloped, you brand me, inferior
That is the way you have forced me to see myself
I detest that image! What is more, it's a lie!
But now I know you, you old cancer,
and I know myself as well.

Aimé Césaire, *The Tempest*, 1968

The actors and actions of structural violence are hidden by symbolic or cultural violence that makes up the fabric of the global capitalist political economy, but as researchers we are never ‘discovering’ or drawing back the curtain on this violence in the communities in which they exist. The violence of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline was never invisible to people along the pipeline in Nanga and Kribi.

In this case, I resist the assertion that the ‘discursive production of a system of domination [is such that] the subjugated are prevented from producing for themselves the categories that would allow them to recognise their own subordination’ (Springer 2012: 137); this approach is informed by Antonio Gramsci’s work on the ideological apparatuses that discipline the consciousness of workers, through which hegemony is maintained. So that while this understanding of discursive disciplining assists in conceptualising the mechanisms that enable the oppression of Euro-American people and places, it is not equally persuasive as a framework for understanding places where post-colonial violence, injustice and domination are viscerally material (to echo an

argument made by Fanon in 1961, which remains relevant). People in Nanga and Kribi understand and engage with the power, structural violence and the attendant suffering of structural violence in complex and diverse ways. Positing people as unable to conceive or understand of the reasons for their suffering is inherently disempowering, not to mention, in the case of Nanga and Kribi, demonstrably untrue. Indeed, I have found that the inverse is often true: the most nuanced and thoughtful contemplations on the processes and motivations for structural violence come from those who live within its confines. These wisdoms arise from generational knowledge compiled from years of life, struggle and suffering within uneven and deeply exploitative social arrangements.

In classifying such violence as ‘imperceptible’ (Nixon 2012: 10), there is a certain re-affirming of entire communities and places (outside the dominant centre) as invisible, which dismisses the capacity of people who live within structures of violence to perceive that violence. This performs a disqualification of experiences that is at odds with the intentions and orientation of the activist-intellectual work on structural violence. Operating from the notion that structural violence is invisible has a number of implications on action and resistance studies, namely because the possibility of resistance becomes hinged on the notion that *visibility* is a precursor to resistance: to resist structural violence, it must be seen. More problematically, the in/visibility discussion is much more about the participation in a community of visibility and power, with a vocabulary or language through which to stake a claim. In this case, regardless of the level of suffering affected by structural violence, it will remain invisible or, perhaps it is better to say that suffering will remain *unfelt* by privileged populations in the ‘distribution of the sensible’ (Ranciere 2004: 12), which includes the sensible divisions that govern perception, including between the visible

and the invisible as well as the speak-able and the unspeakable.

To ‘see’ something is to encounter it in a particular ‘field of visibility’ (Winter 2012)—one that is created through political, cultural, and scientific processes and these processes determine what objects are problems and understandable and therefore visible. Yves Winter (2012: 198) explains, that the field of visibility ‘is not simply an absence or a lack of visibility’ because structural violence is both known and visible. Euro-American societies are spatially disciplined to not ‘see’ structural violence through a set of instruments, techniques and procedures in spaces produced through particular social and political relationships and partitioned off from and distilled from places and people affected by structural violence. In his study of direct and interpersonal violence, James Tyner (2012: ix) defines this spatial production of violence as ‘the uneven geographies of violence’. These uneven geographies, he explains, are characterised

by the geopolitical, economic, and bio-spatial gulf between the production of ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ places, including the uneven distribution of power, privilege, and wealth between such spaces as well as the uneven distribution of risk, disease, and hardship (Tyner 2012: ix).

In this way, Euro-Americans are often spatially disciplined to not ‘see’ the suffering caused by the particular spatial privileges of living in Euro-American regions. It is not that these violence(s) and sufferings are invisible, Winter (2012: 198) writes, ‘This invisibility describes a failure to acknowledge that is occasioned not by an inadequate optics but by an indifference structurally bound up with the discursive limits of intelligibility’. These boundaries on intelligibility are deeply racialised, as entire populations remain ‘unseen’ or considered irrelevant by the centre. Stuart Hall writes, ‘racism depersonalises. It is a denial of recognition. The master is saying, “I do not see you at all.”’ In the colonial relationship, there is no recognition of humanity; hence there can be no recognition of suffering. This is what Charles Mills

(2007: 35) calls ‘white blindness’, or a ‘cognitive distortion’ of the social world made by race, wherein white people have an historically rooted inability to perceive black suffering; so much so, Trawalter et al. 2012 reveal, white Americans report that black people *feel less pain* than white people. Euro-American spectators of structural violence are racially disciplined to not ‘see’ such violence. Henry Giroux (2010: 50-51) explains

If successful, the language of oppression and cruelty becomes normalized, removed from the sphere of criticism and the culture of questioning. Such a language does more than normalize ignorance, illiteracy, and irrationality; it also produces a kind of psychic hardening and deep-rooted pathology in a society increasingly willing to eliminate the policies that enable the social bonds and protections necessary for a substantive democracy.

This refusal to ‘see’ reflects the tendency of black/white identities to be co-constitutive: so that whiteness exists only in its privileged relationship to blackness and Otherness. In this paradigm, ‘seeing’ the violence of contemporary systems of structural violence entails a confrontation with the emptiness of the myth of modernity (Latour 1993), which is bound up within ideologies of European and white exceptionalism (Blaut 1993; Mignolo 2000, 2011)—an ideology that masks the cavernous violence of the modern colonial project (Rodney 1972; Said 1979; Mignolo 2011) all the while bestowing greater significance to Euro-American-centric histories, geographies, identities and bodies. In short, recognising structural violence requires a re-evaluation of Self within privileged, predominantly (but not exclusively) white communities—as the erasure of histories and stories of structural violence allows empowered understandings of Euro-American communities as ‘developed’ rather than exploitative, as ‘expert’ rather than appropriative, as ‘democratic’ rather than violently unequal and as ‘post-racial’ rather than racially hegemonic.

The spatial conditioning towards indifference effects a de-politicisation of

poverty and injustice and is fundamental to the perpetuation of a globalized financial-political-policy-regime (Peet 2003) that is rooted in the spatial and racial practices of structural violence. At the same time, this spatial disciplining is a consequence of structural violence through a rapport that is both circular and self-reinforcing: white Euro-American communities were spatially disciplined to not 'see' the humanity of non-white peoples in the post-Enlightenment era, and in so doing, condoned systems of settler colonialism, empire and enslavement; Euro-American communities were spatially disciplined to not 'see' the social and direct physical violence against peoples in spaces of the communist and socialist global South in the Cold War anti-communist period; now, a majority in post-9/11 Euro-American communities recognize that petroleum is linked with war abroad so that even if they do not know the precise statistics nor the geographic origins of their petroleum at the pump, they recognise that 'oil is dirty'.¹

The problem is not the invisibility of structural violence, although at least part of the problem is the particular spatial and racialised disciplining of communities in Euro-America to not see. Instead, structural violence has been cognitively standardized as an inescapable component of modernity, e.g., there is no escaping the structural violence of oil when 'we' need oil everyday and when empathetic behaviour means curtailing 'growth' and 'progress' in privileged communities. Slavoj Žižek (2008) similarly writes on the prominence of 'fetishistic disavowal' in the contemporary Euro-American moment. This disavowal is a survivalist-like tool that allows people, after having learned of or witnessed an extraordinarily violent or unjust reality that threatens to upturn their socio-cultural equilibrium, to set it out of

¹ In the 2001 NEETF/ Roper Report Card, a majority (52%) of Americans knew that the bulk of their oil is imported (NEETF/Roper Report Card: 3).

their minds. He describes the internal conversation of a person undergoing fetishistic disavowal, 'I know it, but I refuse to fully assume the consequences of this knowledge, so that I can continue acting as if I don't know it' (Žižek 2008: 46). The 'invisibility' of structural violence might more aptly be termed indifference.

Studies on the neuroscience of empathy and neuroplasticity in neoliberal capitalism articulate connections between the cultivation of cultures lacking in empathy and neoliberal ideology deeply critical of pro-social behaviours, except when such behaviour enhances profitability (Olsen 2012: 25). Tyner (2012: 171) writes,

For those who benefit from safe privilege, there is a tendency to lose sight of violence; for violence to recede into the dark recesses of their mundane world, only to appear as diversion or entertainment. The continuation of these unequal geographies—between the 'safe' and the 'unsafe'—is not acceptable. We can and must demand change in our pedagogy. And in our lives.

Following these pleas for a change in pedagogy, I work to cultivate an acute awareness of the *visibility* of structural forms of violence. Part of this project entails recognising that empathy and capitalism are fundamentally irreconcilable (despite ExxonMobil's marketing campaigns and investments in malaria treatment in Cameroon). Tyner (2012: 165), echoing Susan Opatow, refers to an institutionalization of the 'culture of impunity', as 'unjust practices are overtly or tacitly condoned and unpunished as a result of amnesties, pardons, indifferences, or simply "looking the other way"'. This culture of impunity is bolstered by the dehumanization of Fanon's (1961: 29) colonial bewilderers. Importantly, for Fanon (1961: 29), these bewilderers operate in the 'capitalist countries' through a 'multitude of moral teachers [and] counsellors [who] separate the exploited from those in power'; there are no bewilderers to shape or maintain control in the colonies, instead 'the agents of the government speak the language of pure force...by means of rifle-butts and napalm'.



Figure 56. (above) The location of the pipeline underwater marine terminal, Kribi.
Figure 57. (below) The gas flare from the off-loading vessel is just visible on the horizon, Kribi.

The dilemmas of spectator empathy

A further issue with projects oriented towards ‘raising awareness’ or ‘bringing violence into view’ have to do with the paradoxes of spectator empathy; namely, (i) the reaffirmation of violence through depictions that victimise (a form of dehumanisation through the denial of agency) and (ii) the assumption that particular stories will evoke empathy in an audience *and* that this empathy will provoke some action to end structural violence. Confronting these dilemmas is part of addressing a larger question in radical scholarship: how do we discuss and engage with human suffering in meaningful ways while refusing to craft stories of dispossession that enact further violence (as symbolic violence)?

The former president of the Association of American Geographers, Eric Sheppard, reflects on the relationship between geography, geographers and violence; he writes,

There is a remarkable disconnect between the many forms of violence stalking the earth, and a lack of attention to and critical reflection on violence by geographers... Geography needs to transcend this disconnect: not just to study geographies of violence, but more importantly to examine the role of Geography in shaping violence (Sheppard 2013: para. 1).

Part of the project of uncovering and elucidating the role that the discipline of geography has played in the perpetuation of violence requires that geographers also directly confront the violence of and in writing about violence. How do we conceive of place, land and lives amidst dispossessing processes and violence in a way that does not perpetuate discursive or symbolic violence? Standard narratives that present violence in a linear cause-and-effect manner are underpinned by the notion that violence (as well as suffering and pain) is quantifiable; those violence(s) that cannot be measured, observed or documented appear then as romanticised, whimsical and generalised. How should we represent ‘the nature and distribution of extreme

suffering' (Farmer 2005: xiii) that characterises structural violence in way that repudiates representations of people as victimised?

Vanesa Castán Broto (2013), for example, illustrates the symbolic violence in the performance of environmental pollution science in coal ash pollution in studies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Environmental science, she argues, has a 'limited capacity to challenge' environmental pollution because the language of the science narrows its goals and conceptual framework, leading to disconnections between reports from local people of illness and pain and the 'hard science' of the pollution, which discounted people's lived experiences. I've been told that medical students are instructed to take a patient's self-reporting of pain as 95 per cent valid, regardless of the interpretations of medical personnel. This approach is founded on the knowledge that the person knows his/her body and embodied pain more than any observer. I adopt this approach in my project and in so doing endeavour to see the pipeline project without (as much as I can from where I stand) perpetuating a violent spectating or dehumanising voyeurism.

Moreover, a dominant focus on pain as a means to 'raise awareness' has led to the criticism that people are flattened or reduced to their pain. There is a risk in intellectual projects that focus on exposing the structures and processes of violence in human life, they might paradoxically 'further distance... people from one another' by constructing people as 'bodies in pain on the horizon' (Muppidi 2012). This is a danger in scholarship on structural forces, which might inadvertently cast the dominating structure as omnipotent and ubiquitous, effectively erasing the agency and humanity of people living amidst such forces. Scholarship that evokes pity inevitably reproduces those very power hierarchies that the scholarship of structural violence seeks to transform. Elizabeth Dauphinée (2007: 145), in regards to the use of the

photography of torture to ‘raise awareness’, argues, ‘the bodies in the photographs are still exposed to our gaze in ways that render them abject, nameless and humiliated—even when our goal in the use of that imagery is to expose their condition’. In this context, I wonder more and more about the intentions beyond depictions of human suffering: firstly, if we already know that structural violence is unsustainable and unliveable, does scholarship on the subject simply proliferate new figures? Secondly, if remaining silent condones structural violence, isn’t ‘speaking out’, ‘reporting’ or ‘witnessing’ likewise problematic for its self-appointed, almost evangelical, ascription of authorial responsibility?

Finally, the audience that spectates representations of violence, suffering and pain is either (i) empowered by the sense that *they* can change the system, (ii) temporarily outraged or (iii) unaffected and indifferent altogether. The last point echoes recent work in neuroscience and neuroanthropology on the impact of a neoliberal environment on human emotions, including empathy. Gary Olsen (2013), for example, describes a ‘*culturally acquired empathy-deficit disorder [that has] its roots in the dominant socioeconomic system*’ of neoliberal capitalism (italics original, Olsen 2013: 57). This ‘acquired empathy-deficit disorder’ is a result of the disciplining of popular consciousness and everyday life by neoliberal market mentality. Olsen explains that there is an

incongruity between our substrate of inborn empathy and the external environment significantly contributes to the creation of empathy-suppressed individuals because the culture virtually *requires* the methodical bracketing off of empathy...we habitually violate our biological moral compass, and secondary sociopathy becomes not only a normal behavior but also a necessary and rewarded adaptive behavior under the aforementioned framework (Olsen 2013: 57).

Neoliberalism has so thoroughly colonised life in Euro-American societies that notions of community have been almost entirely suppressed in favour of the primacy

of the individual. Instead, as Olsen outlines and as John Perkins (2004) echoes in his autobiographical account of working as an ‘economic hit man’,² uncaring or seemingly sociopathic individuals often achieve enormous economic success through the perpetuation of structural violence. It is interesting to note that the work on structural violence has been relatively weak in its under-studying of the perpetrators of the violence. More scholarship needs to look at the mechanisms, behaviours and imaginative practices through which privileged people dissociate from structural violence.

Finally, the scholarship on structural violence—rather than focus attention on ‘raising awareness’ or ‘exposing violence’—might better serve communities living in contexts of structural violence by looking at how communities work to rehabilitate and seriously address potential avenues through which we might contribute to the project of ending structural violence, so that we take our scholarship beyond critique—to creation and resolution for alternatives—and concretely explore the elements necessary for structural justice. How puzzlingly rare is the word ‘revolution’ in work on structural violence when, by definition, it is revolutionary momentum that will terminate the system? This is not to say that scholar-activists should emphasise scholarship as a means to cultivate a ‘revolutionary consciousness’;³ not only would this project echo the evangelical problematic of the

² Economic hit men (EHMs) are, according to former EHM, John Perkins (2004: ix), ‘highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and other foreign “aid” organisations into the coffers of huge corporations and the pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planet’s natural resources’.

³ Particularly as, James Scott (1985: 318) argues, many revolutionary movements, including the French and Russian Revolutions, emerged within reformist and not revolutionary intentions. Movements might, at least initially, assert claims, rights and demands *within* the framework of the dominant discourse (Scott 1985; Jackson 2009: 32-38).

scholar's conflated understanding of her/himself as the knower (critiqued above), but it would reinforce the idea that people do not comprehend the various ways in which they have been subjected to unjust political, economic and social structures. Fusing structural violence with radical geographical approaches that are rooted in a commitment to 'project[s] coordinated by solidarity emanating from' shared urgencies in the 'transform[ation of] *everything* that exists... beginning... with the economy', begin with a theoretical and practical engagement with the 'right to exist' (italics added, Peet 2000: 952 and 953). Ruth Wilson Gilmore (italics added 2002: 22), likewise emphasises the need for study of the '*interrelated fatalities*' of structural injustice; she writes,

Geographers should develop a research agenda that centers on race as a condition of existence and as a category of analysis, because the territoriality of power is key to understanding racism. The political geography of race entails investigating space, place, and location as simultaneously shaped by gender, class, and scale. By centering attention on those most vulnerable to the fatal couplings of power and difference signified by *racism*.

Conclusion

This thesis has centred upon the structural violence created by an oil pipeline that connects Chad and Cameroon, the particular processes of violence and how this informs local resistance practices and livelihood strategies. I have offered a theoretical re-articulation of the processes of structural violence tangible through the body, historically compounded, spatially compounded and acutely visible. Structural processes, I argue, are crucial to an understanding of moments, sentiments and contextual practices of resistance (many of which are not successful in an established sense) in communities along the pipeline.

A decolonial re-articulation of structural violence focuses on the processes and effects of displacement, land and resource dispossession—including environmental

damage, water pollution, oil spillage, increased exposure to disease, deforestation and resulting agricultural shifts—as forms of violence that concurrently shape and inform peoples’ everyday lives. To these ends, land dispossession and displacement in-place are complex and intersecting forms of structural violence, which effect hunger, thirst, and land death. A decolonial lens enriches the scholarship of structural violence with the narratives of the people who live amidst structurally violent forces. A focus on the connections between local interpretations of structural violence and resistance practices demonstrates that structural violence is not an all-dominating structure (in a structuralist sense). Instead, this violence is enormously entangled and complicated and, as I argue, people navigate, resist and acquiesce in complex ways. Furthermore, my recognition (relatively late in the writing of this thesis) that there are multiple forms of structural violence—including infra/structural violence, industrial structural violence and institutionalized structural violence—offers promising new insights for future work on the subject, including as a mechanism to provide a more nuanced analysis of analysing its varying manifestations, processes and outcomes.

A combination of pre-pipeline structural and physical violence, military regimes, and a private ExxonMobil army stationed in Chad, combined with the illusive nature, obscure processes, vast spatialities and slow temporalities of structural violence pose significant challenges to organised resistance in communities along the pipeline. What we find is better understood as *quiet* resistance struggles that unfold in the everyday activities of mockery, storytelling, joking, and livelihood adaptations; otherwise, resistance tends to unfold in the domain of labour disputes and labour rights. These practices help make sense of ‘life and hardship *in place*’ (emphasis added, Mususa 2012) and tell the ‘other side’ of the story of systemic violence, i.e. the story of *being* amid violent processes and structures, that of creatively resisting,

suffering, insulting, laughing and trying. Dignity, shame and pride inform protest, resistance and uprisings as much as, or maybe more than, the visibility of ‘the enemy’; in a context of increasingly porous power structures, as violence is embedded within layers and multilevel of global transactions, the violence does not need to be made ‘visible’. The search for greater visibility and ever-greater visibility—as transparency, full disclosure and those liberal principals that have become embedded within the corporate responsibility discourse—is a trap.

People along the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline have found ways to get by and make a living by using their own cultural tools and guiding cosmologies, despite the project’s violence. Cultivating spaces of peace—not just the absence of direct war as the dominant Western liberal concept of peace based on security, but a nonviolent peace founded upon local notions and practices of wellbeing (Daley 2014: 66-7)—is not so much a problem of consciousness-raising (or ‘pulling the curtain back’ on various forms of morally abhorrent policies, institutions, and projects) but a wholesale discourse struggle against multinational corporations that have extensive political pull, economic power, and ideological sway—including multi-scalar, bureaucratic tactics that dispel criticism, dismiss eco-social concerns as unfounded and co-opt projects for structural and social justice.

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