

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP IN NIGERIA: A PETROLEUM INDUSTRY BENEFICIARY ANALYSIS¹

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Abstract

With the aid of ethnographic data obtained in Nigeria's oil and gas region (the Niger Delta), and relevant secondary data, this article makes a case for a beneficiary-centered approach to corporate citizenship analysis, and thus urges a shift from the dominant corporatist approach. Two interrelated questions are examined: how do ordinary people who share their socio-ecologic and cultural neighbourhoods with petroleum operators encounter corporate citizenship, and what do such encounters say about corporate citizenship philosophy and practice in the Nigerian petroleum industry? The article is not an anti-theory of corporate citizenship or of the broader sustainable development debate. Rather, it is a counter-narrative derived from the experiences and stories of ordinary people in beneficiary communities. It offers some empirical bases for re-examining the conventional assumptions about both corporate citizenship and sustainable development.

Keywords: Beneficiary analysis, corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility, petroleum, Niger Delta, Nigeria.

Introduction

One important contribution that Africa could make to the corporate citizenship discourse is to shift analytical focus from corporate "sustainability", "social accountability", and "community development" reports, to "corporate citizenship" as encountered by ordinary people who share their socio-ecologic and cultural spaces with large industrial corporations. Nigeria offers a particularly useful opportunity for this given the scale of its upstream oil and gas operations and the socio-political and environmental crisis that the petroleum industry has spawned in the country's oil heartland, the Niger Delta. However, this push is not taking place nearly as vigorously as would be expected. As Amaeshi *et al* (2006) have noted, this is partly because a systematic, scholarly interest in corporate citizenship studies is still very "meagre" in Nigeria – and perhaps also in many other parts of the developing world.

At a global level, the literature on corporate citizenship (or on its aliases - "corporate social responsibility", "responsible competitiveness", and "responsible commerce" - to name only a few) emphasizes the imperative of doing business with a social and ecologic conscience. However, the corporatist focus on what business enterprises and big organisations claim to be doing *for* their host communities and the broader society raises a concern as to whether the dominant approach to corporate citizenship studies can lead to a holistic understanding of what companies actually do *in* – and *to* - the community. In other words, can we know all that we should about the character of corporate citizenship without shifting the gaze from the "corporate side" of corporate-community involvement?

It may even be argued that contestations around the definitions of corporate citizenship, the "models" (Martin, 2004) for the "institutionalization" (Appels et al, 2006) of corporate citizenship, and, ultimately, what role corporations can or should play in sustainable development persist because the feelings and narratives of beneficiary communities about

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corporate-community involvement have not yet been sufficiently privileged. Protests by activist organizations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), and the like, as well as by ordinary people in the vicinity of industrial operations over the actions and inactions of corporations must be rigorously interrogated, for therein may lie critical analytical ingredients with which to make a realistic contribution to the theory and practice of corporate citizenship. In other words, there is an urgent need to understand the “beneficiary side” of corporate-community involvement.

The central thesis of this article may be stated as a simple question: how do ordinary people who share their socio-ecologic and cultural neighbourhoods with big business encounter corporate citizenship? Put differently, what would the state of knowledge about, and advocacy around, corporate citizenship be if the narratives and first-hand experiences of “beneficiary” communities were taken as seriously as corporate “sustainability” and “community development” reports? The author approaches these questions not by proffering a simple answer (and such an answer would invariably take a great many empirical studies to evolve), but by examining the theory and practice of corporate citizenship in the Nigerian petroleum industry, which in recent years has witnessed a frenzied spate of deep offshore exploration activities. The main focus is on how corporate citizenship practices in the petroleum industry resonate with ordinary people in the immediate neighbourhoods of upstream petroleum business.

In trying to understand the driving forces behind the heightened interest by the major transnational oil operators in deep offshore ventures, the article makes two assumptions. One – and the more obvious – is that such ventures are part of a broader resource scramble driven by the growing international demand for oil and the perceived economic promises of new deep offshore oil reserves. The ventures (which take place away from the village communities and the shallow waters, the erstwhile theatres of petroleum extraction in Nigeria) do no doubt promise to reinforce Nigeria’s position as Africa’s leading oil-producing country.

The second assumption, which must be understood against the background that Nigeria still has lucrative oil reserves onshore and in the continental shelf (*Businessday*, 2005), is that the operators arguably perceive the economic and political risks associated with continued onshore expansion. This risks hinge in part on decades-long corporate citizenship failures in the Niger Delta. It is evident in the fact that in recent years, disenchanted youths in the oil province youths have threatened to slash the oil companies’ fingers off “their” land – and in certain instances have made good their threats (Akpan, 2006a). The Niger Delta as a whole is awash with community protests and reports of disruptions to oil production activities, the kidnap of (mainly foreign) oil workers by irate youths, bloody clashes between youth groups and law enforcement agents, destruction of oil infrastructure and a generally restive atmosphere that many find inconducive to business operations. The rest of this article unfolds along the thrust of this second assumption.

It must be stated at the outset that “corporate citizenship”, as used in this article, refers to what corporate organizations do (whether voluntarily or through legal compulsion) for the direct benefit of the broader community and the environment within which they operate – such activities being *over and above* what is directly and traditionally necessary to boost productivity and profit. This definition shifts attention away from the *theory-of-everything* character that corporate citizenship seems to have been imbued with in the literature. For this author, corporate citizenship does not include salaries and emoluments, union recognition, workplace health and safety, and other processes revolving around combining capital with labour to produce profit, much of which ordinarily falls within the rubric of labour relations. This definition questions the wisdom of some analysts who praise as “serious engagement with CSR initiatives” a named transnational company’s implementation of “living wage standards for all of its farm workers in every country in which it harvests fruit” (Aguilera

et al), and suggestions that such “CSR initiatives” will ultimately make a positive impact on the community and the ecosystem!²

The article draws heavily on ethnographic data the author collected in three Niger Delta communities between March and November 2003. There were the Bayelsa State town of Oloibiri (where commercial oil deposits were first struck in 1956), Ebubu, an Ogoni community (and another of the oldest oil communities, located in Rivers State), and Iko (in Akwa Ibom State)³. Although the article is not an in-depth analysis of community perceptions of the corporate citizenship activities of any single transnational oil company in Nigeria, nor should it be read as an overall assessment of corporate citizenship in the Nigerian petroleum industry as a whole, it was important for the author that the field work be done in some of the more prominent and historic oil-producing communities. Among such were host communities of Shell Petroleum, the biggest and oldest transnational oil operator in Nigeria. Historically Shell is also the operator with the most significant onshore presence in the country.

Incidentally, in the new scramble for deep offshore oil reserves Shell has also played a pivotal role. For instance, the company’s announcement in 2005 of its having commenced crude oil production at the 60 square-kilometre Bonga oil field, located some 120 kilometres off Nigeria’s coast, drew considerable attention to Nigeria’s deep offshore oil potential (LNG Intelligence, 2005). The Bonga field has an estimated reserve of about one billion barrels of oil. Other companies that have announced deep offshore oil finds include: Agip (Abo field), Texaco/Famfa (Agbami field), ExxonMobil (Erha field), Chevron (Aparo field) (Nigeria Oil & Gas Online 2005)

Corporate Citizenship: The Case for a Beneficiary Perspective

As a systematic subject field, corporate citizenship is comparatively new in Nigeria. One explanation for this, according to Amaeshi *et al* (2006), is the conventional association of the concept with big business. As these analysts point out, in Nigeria the term “big business” generally means transnational business, much of it concentrated in the oil and gas, telecommunication and manufacturing sectors. Although a number of indigenous firms in the financial services sector (banks especially) have recently made, and are continuing to make, forays into other West African countries, the country’s business landscape is characterized by small and medium-scale (mainly family-owned) enterprises. Amaeshi *et al* (2006:18) further suggest that transnational corporations have more to lose in terms of reputation and investment if they remain impervious to “pressures” from civil society, market forces, globalization and consumers to operate in a socially responsible manner. By comparison, they argue, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices among indigenous Nigerian businesses are driven by a deeply cultivated “propensity toward communitarian identity”. In other words, the dominant business ethic among indigenous companies is about doing good for the broader community rather simply focusing the narrow financial objectives of business owners.

Notwithstanding the distasteful essentialism in the above analysis, one notes the main contestations in the corporate citizenship debate in Nigeria, which the authors have drawn attention to. They revolve around the meanings companies, even the big indigenous Nigerian companies, attach to CSR. In their recent survey of some of Nigeria’s major banks, Amaeshi *et al* (2006:29) found that although the banks had different CSR initiatives, and even considered such initiatives a “necessary” complement to government’s development programmes, the dominant “wave” of CSR was philanthropy and altruism. The authors

² The reader may note that in Nigeria the upstream oil industry pays by far the highest wages at every level, creating what some have inappropriately termed a “labour aristocracy” in the country (HRW, 1999:95). Yet, the diverse social and environmental atrocities in the sector have led some analysts to warn Western consumers of Nigerian oil that they are actually consuming “blood that is mixed with... oil” (Olukoya 2001)

³ For a detailed ethnographic profile of the three communities, the Niger Delta, and the structure of the Nigerian upstream petroleum industry see Akpan (2006a, 2005).

wondered why CSR in Nigeria had not “advanced” from, might one say, mere acts of kindness, to economic, legal and ethical responsibilities.

Going by what Locke (2002:2-4) has identified as four-model discourse on corporate citizenship – namely “minimalist”, “philanthropic”, “encompassing” and “social activist” - Nigeria’s act-of-kindness model of CSR would not rank very highly:

Most multinational firms operating in Nigeria... focus on either CSR mandates from their home countries or CSR activities that directly impact on their businesses... while sometimes ignoring local constructions of CSR (Amaeshi *et al* 2006: 27).

What does “philanthropic” CSR entail? According to Ashley and Haysom (2006:268), it is typically “project specific”, relates to “specific issues relevant to a given organization”, and hardly goes beyond “donations and gifts”. This contrasts profoundly with “social activist” CSR, which seeks to bring about broad social change by “extending the boundaries of supposed beneficiaries beyond... a restricted number of shareholders and/or stakeholders” (Locke 2002:2-3).

Some transnational oil companies in Nigeria have indicated awareness of these “waves”, and some, like Shell, have spoken of the limitations of the dominant corporate citizenship theory and practice in the country. As this author has reported elsewhere (Akpan 2006a:224), Shell in 1997 made public its decision to abandon “community assistance” CSR praxis, in favour of what it called a “proactive” approach, which entailed “world class” “community development” standards. In one of its Reports, the company called it a “strategic shift”, which ostensibly echoes Locke’s “social activist” CSR:

The shift was informed by the need for communities to be in charge of their own development, and to foster greater partnership with development agencies and NGOs in capacity building within communities. The aim was to promote the application of best practice in community development to boost family incomes and improve community welfare in Nigeria (SPDC 2002:15).

In an interview with an officer in the Community Affairs department of Shell in Port Harcourt, the Niger Delta’s principal city and one of Shell’s most important industrial sites in Nigeria, further light was shed on the company’s “new” way of dealing with communities:

In the past we had a community development model that tended to separate project delivery [in Shell’s host communities] from community issues and dynamics. Now the two concerns [projects and community issues] are properly waxed. We no longer just focus on project delivery; we also talk of community issues. We try to get the community involved, to build local participants so that they take care of the projects when we are gone. This is the sort of discourse that now drives our involvement in community development.⁴

As might be expected, the company has documented its own “case studies” – stories of local people made “successful”, and local projects adjudged “functional” and “sustainable”, through Shell’s new “sustainable community development” model (SPDC 2002:17, Shell 2005:17). The challenge for scholars is to rely entirely on such “case studies” and self assessments, which typically form part of “sustainability” and “accountability” reports (see SPDC 2002:17), or complement them with critical beneficiary-focused studies of their own. In line with the latter option, a modest attempt is presented in the next section of this article.

Especially concerning the adoption of a predominantly “philanthropic” CSR model, the point must be made that corporate-community involvement in the petroleum industry, as indeed any other industrial sector in Nigeria, is fundamentally guided by law (or, more appropriately, the lack of it). As a key informant at Shell narrated to this author during an interview, CSR praxis in the oil industry is guided by the fact that:

⁴ Interview conducted by the author on May 16, 2003 at SPDC, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

By law it's not the duty of the oil companies to develop any community. The law governing their operations did not mandate them to get into community development. The companies pay tax, royalties, etc., and government should use this to develop the community. At all levels we have a collapse of government. Government is absent in these communities. Government gets its share [of petroleum revenues] and disappears.⁵

The point was made earlier that Nigeria offers a particularly useful opportunity for doing corporate citizenship studies from the perspective of grassroots beneficiaries. This is important given what research has established about the character of industrial operations in Nigeria. For instance, UNEP (2003) paints a particularly worrying picture of the state of environmental sensitivity in Nigeria's industrial landscape:

Industrial pollution from over 5,000 industrial facilities and perhaps another 10,000 small-scale industries, some operating illegally within residential premises, is a growing problem in Nigeria. In places like Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri and Lagos, colored, hot and heavy metal effluent, especially that from the textile, tannery, petrochemicals and paint industries, is discharged directly into open drainages and channels, constituting severe dangers to water users and downstream. Also disturbing is the practice where some industrial facilities bury their expired chemicals and hazardous wastes in their backyards, threatening the water quality of innocent neighbours who rely on their dug-out wells for drinking water (see also (Adediran *et al*, 2004).

Equally worrying is the fact that, historically, many business organizations perpetrating the reckless conduct described by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) have showed little sensitivity towards communities directly affected by such recklessness (Akpan 2006b).

Of the industrial sectors that UNEP makes reference to, the upstream petroleum industry – the sector encompassing oil and gas exploration, oilfield development, production, and related activities – is understandably the most crucial for understanding the character of corporate citizenship in Nigeria. Firstly, petroleum is Nigeria's most important economic commodity: it accounts for about 95 per cent of Nigeria's export revenues and 80 per cent of federal budget funds. Secondly, not unlike the Nigerian government, the oil producing communities have come to depend on petroleum (and in effect on the oil companies) for almost everything: social infrastructure, local socio-economic empowerment, reparation for some four decades of "lost" development, and for some socio-political leverage in Nigeria's scheme of things (Akpan 2006a:233). Thirdly, the companies have also come to define the future of their business in Nigeria – and in particular the Niger Delta – as dependent on their ability to stimulate local development in their host communities – besides the paying of taxes and royalties to the Nigerian government. Shell, in particular, speaks of its "new" model of community development as having, among other objectives, that of helping the company to "secure license to operate... on a sustainable basis" (SPDC 2002:15).

But probably more importantly, because oil operations impact the environment and local communities far more profoundly than many other industrial sectors, many oil companies seem to be finding it counterproductive to make light of corporate citizenship. An illustration can be made with oil spills and gas flaring⁶ - two aspects of petroleum production that exert some of the worst impacts on the Niger Delta society and environment.

When a panel of scientists from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), World Conservation Union, and the National Conservation Foundation (Nigeria) declared recently in Abuja (the Nigerian capital city) that the Niger Delta has been impacted by as much as 1.5 million tons of oil since the 1950s (Vanguard 2006), they were drawing attention not simply to the pollution of

⁵ Interview conducted by the author with a key informant (a responsible officer) on May 16, 2003 at SPDC Port Harcourt, Nigeria. For a detailed account of the legal/institutional framework for petroleum operations in Nigeria, see Akpan (2005).

⁶ For a more comprehensive analysis of the social and environmental impacts of petroleum operations in Nigeria, see Akpan (2006b).

the physical environment, but to a local livelihood crisis affecting millions of local residents. Low pipeline integrity (arising from poor pipeline network maintenance), regulatory weaknesses, the natural moistness, salinity and corrosiveness of the Niger Delta environment, pipeline fires (much of it a result of community unrest), explosions, oil equipment malfunction, tanker leakages, and vandalism – these and more have been blamed for the frequency of oil spills in the Niger Delta. While, globally, the worst spills are associated with crude oil transport – this often involving large quantities of oil per spill occurrence – oil spills in the Niger Delta is widely blamed on corporate recklessness and failings in the regulatory system (Akpan 2006b).

On the occasions during the fieldwork when the author ferried into the creeks with young fishermen in Oloibiri and Iko as a way of understanding how they viewed their occupation, the men's persistent complaint was that (subsistence) fishing, their main occupation, had "died" due to oil pollution. If the dark, stale, oily and stinky creeks – and the famished looks and dilapidated dwellings and fishing craft of the fishermen - could serve as physical evidence of this claim, then the author did witness the problem directly during his fieldwork. Ebubu, the third community, had, among other problems, a blemish that was more than three decades old: a soggy, barren and desolate expanse of land (measuring more than a dozen hectares) that once was a thriving communal farmland, but was destroyed in 1970 by a massive oil spill. The site had not been restored or cleaned as of 2003, when the author visited the community.

Gas flaring, another of the Nigerian petroleum industry's intractable problems, is evident in the orange-coloured night sky and in the atmospheric heat, sooty overhang, and the burning sensations local residents feel when inhaling air. The proportions of total gas production and associated gas (that is the gas by-product of crude oil produced) are estimated to be about 86 per cent and 95 per cent respectively (Oguejiofor 2004, HRW 1999). This volume of gas is flared using what scientists have described as crude methods and "outdated flaring technology", which is why the public health hazards are particularly severe (Sonibare and Akeredolu 2004, Oguejiofor 2004, Ishisone, 2004).

Protests over these and other socio-environmental consequences of petroleum operations spotlight the region as a virtual war zone, with frequent banishment threats to the transnational oil companies, ambushing of oil infrastructure, and abductions – targeting mainly foreign oil workers (*ThisDay* 2006, *The Guardian* 2006). The oil companies respond to these challenges in various ways. The major transnationals typically now search for oil further and further away from the village communities and the continental shelf – and Nigeria's deep offshore has become particularly busy in recent years as a result. Also, as the interview at Shell's community affairs office (quoted earlier) shows, some operators seem to have brought on board a new CSR praxis, or at least are seeking a new balance between responsibility and rhetoric, as a way of "mak[ing] up for past mistakes" (Shell 2005:16) and negotiating their way back into communities that have become quite hostile.

Taken together, the foregoing discussion underlines a need to constantly interrogate the corporate citizenship practices of business organisations – from the perspective of beneficiary communities, rather than merely from companies' own appraisals of their goodwill towards communities and the environment.

Corporate Citizenship: Privileging the Beneficiary Perspective

During the fieldwork in the Niger Delta towns of Oloibiri, Ebubu and Iko, the author found that whereas oil companies speak glowingly about their social investments and other acts of kindness in their host communities, local people tended to see things differently. For instance, while a company would readily hold up a community project it has "sponsored" as part of "sustainable" community development meant for the entire community (*The Punch* 2005) – assuming the claim is not outright fictitious (Akpan 2006, Frynas 2000) - the project

might have been implemented in ways that sowed distrust and divisions in the community in question. Interviews conducted with local leaders and ordinary residents in the three communities revealed that project delivery processes tended to follow what the respondents described as a “divide-and-rule” tactic. By “divide-and-rule”, the respondents meant that the companies preferred to operate through contractors and other local “intermediaries” “created” by them (to serve their interests), bypassing, and sometimes “manipulating”, the “legitimate” structures through which the communities were governed. In so doing, they split communities into mutually antagonistic camps. The author learnt that such processes were a major factor in the intra- and inter-communal violence that erupted from time to time in the oil and gas producing communities. The research implication here is that for every claim that a company’s “community development programmes is for all” (*The Punch* 2005), a researcher must try to uncover not necessarily whether a given community project has been completed, but more importantly who the real beneficiaries are, what community dynamics have been impacted in the delivery process, and to what consequences.

There is also a CSR practice in the Nigerian petroleum industry that can be equated with Shober (2006:3) calls “identity rape”. By this is meant the process whereby the socio-cultural and ecologic heritages of the oil and gas producing communities are trampled upon or rendered irrelevant to the companies or state agencies engaged in corporate citizenship activities. Village communities are reduced to functions, ecologic spaces are altered to economic spaces, indigenous, culturally significant trees and crops are downgraded to mere vegetation and given economistic price tags (Akpan 2005), people are grouped and re-grouped to emphasise or de-emphasise their usefulness to transnational and local oil interests, and otherwise arcane petrolic idiosyncracies are forced upon the local socio-linguistic landscape to produce a distancing discourse among ordinary people. For instance, the Niger Delta is conceptually mapped with such distancing terminologies as “oil well community”, “pipeline community”, “landlord community”, “settlers”, “key community”, and “non-key community”. Each term denotes the “function” of a community, its relative contribution to the oil economy, and, from a corporate citizenship point of view, the relative developmental benefit a community can consider itself legitimately entitled to. As one respondent narrated to this author during the fieldwork:

They [the oil companies] fragment communities and devalue the contributions of communities so that they save money by spending less in the provision of amenities. It’s a strange kind of corporate responsibility (Akpan 2006a:236).

To put the fieldwork findings into perspective, the author now makes a modest attempt to summarise some of the more common corporate citizenship pronouncements of the major oil and gas operators in Nigeria. The pronouncements are then matched against the fieldwork data obtained in Oloibiri, Egbu and Iko, and with relevant secondary data, with a view to highlighting how the theory and practice of corporate citizenship resonates at the grassroots. The result of this exercise is captured in Table 1. It should probably be emphasized that the entries in Table 1 are not intended to belittle the role of business corporations in national development or their contributions to the socio-economic empowerment of people in their Niger Delta host communities. What the Table seeks to do is to provide an empirical basis for interrogating specific developmental claims – claims which often form part of corporate sustainability and accountability reports. The aim is to encourage debates that would make corporate citizenship better respond to socio-economic, ecological and cultural challenges in the communities hosting major industrial operations.

Table 1: Corporate Citizenship Praxis: Views from Above and Below

No.	Corporate Pronouncements	Resonance at the Grassroots
1	"Our community development programme is for all" (<i>The Punch</i> 2005)	A network of newly paved town streets and a community hall (projects sponsored by Shell) were an important evidence of this claim in Ebugu. However, the fieldwork in the three study communities revealed that in many other respects, programme delivery strategies often involved financial and other inducements and pacifications which bred distrust and conflict in the community (Akpan 2006a).
2	Community ruler "salutes" a corporate benefactor (a development agency) for delivering developmental "goodies" to his community. The ruler "endorses" a community water scheme modeled on the front page of a full-colour newsletter published by the agency (<i>NDDC News</i> 2003:1)	<p>The community project in question had not been completed. Local residents believed it had been abandoned.</p> <p>The project had become a subject of intense community squabbles.</p> <p>Claims of community gratitude were dismissed by community members as a corporate scam.</p> <p>A respondent's comment: They [the development agency in question] trick an important person in the community [especially the local chief] into singing their praises so that they would have something [with which to] deceive the Presidency and cover up their non-performance. With such words, Abuja will believe the job has been satisfactorily done. What will ever bring NDDC back here to complete the projects?⁷</p>
3	Full colour photographs – and positive grassroots "testimonials" of community projects in corporate social reports.	While the only social amenities in rural communities such as Oloibiri, Ebugu and Iko often come from corporate social investments, companies sometimes pass off in their brochures uncompleted, abandoned, derelict or poorly completed projects, as well as project prototypes and photographs of projects located in foreign countries as those "completed" and in full use in the rural Niger Delta communities (Frynas 2000, Akpan 2006a; also see entry in 2 above).
4	Oil companies blame community development failures in the Niger Delta on "inter-tribal violence", and "corruption" in the oil region (Shell 2005:17)	The fieldwork revealed that much of the "inter-tribal violence" was a function of the "identity rape" and community fragmentation described earlier.

⁷ Interview conducted by the author in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State on March 20, 2003.

No.	Corporate Pronouncements	Resonance at the Grassroots
		<p>CSR processes also bolstered a manipulative and rivalrous milieu whereby “local kings, ‘youth leaders’, local politicians, militant organization, influential local elite, urban-based cronies of oil company workers and individuals possibly serving as fronts for government functionaries” struggle to set themselves up as “local development intermediaries” (Akpan 2006a:237).</p> <p>The fieldwork also revealed what seemed like a “strategy by various organs in the development delivery process [including the oil companies] to do business with as little commitment to community development as possible (Akpan 2006a).</p>
5	Largest programmes of Shell’s \$106 million social investment spend in 2004 were in Nigeria and the USA (Shell 2005:26)	<p>In the past the company had admitted to spending “more money on bribes and corruption than on community development projects” (quoted in Bustany and Wysham 2000). Studies might be necessary to track the end-use of the 2004 spend.</p> <p>Another oil company similarly “wasted” about US\$28 million community development budgets in [certain] parts of the [Niger] Delta between 1990 and 1997 (Bustany and Wysham, 2000).</p> <p>Also refer to entry in 4 above.</p>
6	To “make up for past mistakes”, Shell has turned to “world class standards of community development” since 1997.	<p>During his fieldwork in 2003, the author found “little to suggest that ‘world class’ standards of community development had emerged or were taking root” in the three communities studied (Akpan 2006a:2006).</p> <p>“Partly as a result of CSR interventions... each of the three communities presented the image of a house divided against itself” (Akpan 2006a:237)</p>

What probably does not come out clearly in Table 1 is that while ordinary people often speak of needs such as roads, town halls, water, electricity, reparation for environmental damage, compensation for vegetation destroyed in the industrial development, and economic empowerment of local citizens, they often also indicate that these projects, “compensations” and expectations could not come at all costs. The “benefits” could not be at the expense of deeply held community values. For instance, a young man suddenly made rich through winning an oil company contract to construct an overhead community water tank in his home town could not suddenly seek to become the indigenous ruler of the town unless he has the requisite, culturally defined qualifications to ascend to that office. Benefactors could not also

be expected to interfere with, or otherwise influence, processes leading to the election of, say, a local King.

For their part, the petroleum operators are driven principally by the need to ensure that they “secure... the license to operate... on a sustainable basis” (SPDC 2002:16). This sometimes means being seen to be doing something *for* a community. In order to deliver projects quickly, benefactors often avoid the time-consuming process of navigating complex community structures. Rather they try to “grow their own timber” by “setting up” local representatives through whom to build “result-oriented” local partnerships with beneficiary communities. This is why the Niger Delta is characterized by intense jostling for relationships with oil companies, state agencies and political organs with important roles to play in the petroleum sector. In such a milieu, it may not be out of place to say that interfering with the functioning of indigenous structures of community governance comes naturally! Many local residents the author spoke with in Oloibiri, for instance, feared that the King was on the verge of being “dethroned” as a result of such dynamics. Also in Oloibiri, where there was a breakdown of trust between a segment of the “youth” population and a segment of the “elders”, the author found that both sides attributed the tension to their differing perceptions of the rewards of community project delivery.

Perhaps the most important point that can be made about corporate-community involvement in the three study communities is that as a social process, there is nothing linear about corporate citizenship. Companies, state agencies, beneficiary communities – all enter the process with particular meanings, motivations and expectations, which often markedly differ. For a researcher, then, a beneficiary approach is a crucial opportunity for observing how the theory and practice of corporate citizenship play out.

Conclusion

While the period since the mid-1990s has witnessed an unprecedented wave of scholarly interest in the Nigerian petroleum industry, it is only in the last few years that “systematic” studies of petroleum-related community conflict and other sustainability dilemmas in the country’s oil region have begun to emerge (Obi 2005:1). The foregoing analysis has been an attempt to contribute to such “systematic” studies. In this case, the attempt has been to subject the conventional, corporatist and “practitioner-driven” discourse of corporate citizenship (Moon et al 2003:1) to a beneficiary-focused analysis. From ethnographic data obtained in three rural Niger Delta communities, the article has shown how the differing motivations and expectations of benefactors and beneficiaries of corporate-community involvement could sow distrust and conflict among different segments of the community. Indeed, if the narratives and experiences of ordinary people in the study communities could be generalized to the Niger Delta as whole, they could support the conclusion that corporate citizenship praxis has had important anti-developmental consequences in the oil region.

While the discussion in the article need not be construed as an anti-theory of corporate citizenship, data from the study communities do provide some empirical basis for taking beneficiary narratives and experiences seriously, which could then mean doing corporate citizenship studies somewhat differently.

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