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Walls and white elephants: Oil extraction, responsibility, and infrastructural violence in Equatorial Guinea

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Abstract

Starting from the juxtaposition of Equatorial Guinea's luxurious private oil compounds with the sporadic and uneven public infrastructure outside their walls, this article explores how infrastructure becomes a key site through which oil and gas companies and Equatoguinean actors negotiate entanglement and disentanglement, responsibility and its abdication. If basic forms of infrastructural violence include exclusion and disconnection, that violence is redoubled by the work of disentanglement—the work to abdicate responsibility for those forms of violence. Drawing on 14 months of fieldwork in Equatorial Guinea, as well as on the work of Michel Callon and Koray Çaliskan, this article describes how the work-intensive disentanglement evidenced in the enclaves operates on behalf of the marketization of oil and gas. Marketization is made possible through work to deny the web of sociopolitical relations required for hydrocarbon extraction and production, thus allowing the commodity (and the companies producing it) to appear as if separate from the broader social context within which they operate. At the same time, however, this work to deny certain social relations inevitably requires the production and internalization of others, often materialized through the production and manipulation of infrastructure.

Keywords

oil extraction, disentanglement, responsibility, enclaves, Equatorial Guinea

Hurricane Ike struck Houston and much of eastern Texas in September 2008. At the time I was living in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, doing fieldwork

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in the burgeoning oil and gas industry.¹ Many of my informants were Texans, living as expatriate oil industry managers in the tiny Central African country. Days after Hurricane Ike hit, I stood in a security checkpoint building with a few other American women – wives of male expatriate management – going through the rituals of security clearance for admission to a private oil compound. As we waited, the women began to talk about home. They had family and friends in Texas, who, in the wake of the hurricane, had been living without electricity or running water for several days. One woman worried out loud about her 24-year-old daughter in Houston who had told her that there was no more gasoline, ice was sold out at local stores as were ice chests. ‘How will she eat?’, she asked. But in the next breath she noted the incongruity, the strangeness, that here in Equatorial Guinea people live without electricity and running water every day.

The transnational oil industry in Equatorial Guinea is based in and around the capital city, not only in walled residential and business compounds, but also on the rigs that sparkle and blaze at night off Malabo’s shores. Since 2000, this long-impooverished micro-state of 600,000 people has received over \$50 billion in capital deployment from American-based oil and gas companies alone.² Among the most important new oil producers in Africa, Equatorial Guinea is at the center of the petroleum industry’s ‘new Persian Gulf’, from which upwards of 17 percent of US net crude oil and oil products now come (USEIA, 2010). Perhaps not surprisingly, everyday life in the capital city and around the small country reflects neither this spectacular inflow of wealth nor the statistical fantasies it produces – that Equatorial Guinea, for example, has the highest per capita wealth in Africa, on par with that of Denmark or Taiwan (CIA, 2010). Instead, Equatoguineans live with sporadic electricity, endemic typhoid and malaria, and without potable running water in their homes. In affluent areas the lack of public infrastructure gives way to private provision, and those who can afford it buy generators for electricity or put tanks on their roofs for water. But even my next-door neighbor – the Ministry of Finance and Budgets – was routinely dark for days and even weeks at a time. Education and healthcare systems were similarly erratic, as were food staples in Malabo’s import-reliant markets. With no industrialized agriculture, when the border with Cameroon closed (which it often did) fresh vegetables rapidly disappeared and prices skyrocketed on the dwindling piles that remained.

Meanwhile, on the border of that same city, next to the airport, the gates and walls of private oil industry compounds open onto manicured lawns, landscaped hedges and flowers, paved roads with speed limits and fire hydrants, stately suburban homes with SUVs in garages, and sprawling office and industrial complexes. The largest complex alone generated enough electricity to power the entire country’s electricity needs 24 hours per day, every day. Food to feed expatriate employees was shipped from Europe and the United States. The luxurious homes in which expatriate management lived were serviced by their own sewage and septic systems, and appointed with flat screen televisions, wireless internet, and landline phone service with Houston area codes. Each house had an Equatoguinean maid and the office complexes had Equatoguinean janitorial services. The compounds

also included pools, gyms, basketball and tennis courts, restaurants, bars, and at one, a movie theater and small golf course. Malaria, endemic to the Equatorial Guinea just on the other side of the wall, had been all but eradicated on the compounds. Management-level expatriate oil workers and their wives living in these lavish ‘suburbs of Houston’ received a 75 percent salary increase for working in a ‘hardship’ post.

Disentanglement as infrastructural violence

Enclaving, or the unequal distribution of urban infrastructure, is nothing new and certainly not unique to tiny Malabo or the oil industry. Critical urbanists increasingly encourage our attention to the sociotechnics of the built environment, highlighting the infrastructural (dis)connections constructed through class, race, the aesthetics of security, neoliberalism and planning power (Caldeira, 2000; Davis, 2006; Gandy, 2006; Graham and Marvin, 2001; Low, 2003; Soja, 2000). These disconnections are everywhere present in Equatorial Guinea’s oil enclaves, and yet there are productive ethnographic peculiarities to consider as well: all compound residents are from a single company or group of companies; residents live *and* work within the enclave; housing is zoned by ‘skill level’ – barrack-like conditions for mostly Indian and Pakistani workers, shared dormitory accommodations for mid-level (mostly Filipino) workers, and luxury homes for (mostly white, North American and Western European) managers. With companies acting as both landlord and employer, compounds create an elevated level of employee/inhabitant control, all of which make Equatorial Guinea’s enclaves arguably closer to a company town model than they are to the forms of privatized urbanism increasingly typical around the world (Crawford, 1995; Ferguson, 1999, 2006; Porteus, 1970, 1974; Vitalis, 2007).

Oil and gas companies build enclaves in Equatorial Guinea exclusively for their own residential and corporate use. Beyond renting the land, the government does not participate in the building, maintenance, or regulation of these spaces. To put it in Mann’s (1984) formulation, companies, not the state, exercise a tremendous amount of infrastructural power in these sites. Only expatriate employees are allowed (in fact, required) to live on the compounds, and Equatoguineans, regardless of their class position, governmental authority, or employment with the company, are prohibited from living therein. While locals come and go as security guards, maids, or gardeners, secretaries, local content managers or government liaisons, public transport is prohibited from entering the compounds, and all non-resident personnel must wear an employee or visitor’s badge at all times while inside.

Both the company town model and the privatization of urban space more generally produce now-familiar forms of violence. Malabo’s compounds enclose elevated levels of worker control, the suppression of labor organizing, and deliberate residential zoning reinforcing racial hierarchies (Crawford, 1995; Finn, 1998; Vitalis, 2007). Enclave construction not only forces dispossession on many local residents, but also symbolizes the lack of access to services such as potable water,

reliable electricity, and other forms of domestic comfort in Equatorial Guinea beyond the walls. The enclaves' private luxury, in other words, stands as a securitized monument to escalating petro-inequality and the failure of the state to invest its newfound wealth in public services. My interest in infrastructural violence starts here, with the juxtaposition of the enclaves and life outside their walls, but moves in a slightly different direction.

Drawing on Rodgers and O'Neill's call (this issue) to think through new sites of responsibility for inequality in urban life, I want to explore the violence entailed in another kind of infrastructural disconnection at work in the enclaves. Specifically, I am interested in the oil industry's efforts to disentangle the production of profit from the place in which it happens to find itself, to structure liability and responsibility in such a way that the industry can remove itself from the social, legal, political and environmental entanglements in which it is so deeply enmeshed in Equatorial Guinea. I would like to suggest that the work-intensive disentanglement from responsibility for life outside enclave walls, the building of spatial and phenomenological distance in which the enclaves are at once in and not in Equatorial Guinea, is itself a form of violence.

To explore this relationship between infrastructure and the intentional abdication of responsibility, I draw on Callon (1997, 1998) and Çaliskan and Callon's (2009, 2010) work on disentanglement, framing, and marketization. The work-intensive disentanglement evidenced in the enclaves operates on behalf of the marketization of oil and gas. It intends to deny the web of sociopolitical relations required for hydrocarbon extraction and production, allowing the commodity (and the companies producing it) to appear as if separate from those relations. As Callon has it, however, this work to deny certain social relations inevitably requires the production and internalization of others. Framing produces overflow; disentanglement leads to further entanglements:

If the [commodity] remains entangled, the one who receives it is never quit and cannot escape from the web of relations. The framing is never over. The debt cannot be settled. This notion of entanglement is very useful, for it is both theoretical and practical. It enables us to think and describe the process of 'marketization', which, like a process of framing or disentanglement, implies investments and precise actions to cut certain ties, and internalize others. (Callon, 1998: 19)

In this article I explore how infrastructure becomes a key site through which oil and gas companies and Equatoguinean actors negotiate entanglement and disentanglement, responsibility and its abdication. If basic forms of infrastructural violence include exclusion and disconnection, that violence is redoubled by the work of disentanglement, the work to abdicate responsibility for those forms of violence. The ethnographic question is how infrastructure comes to be a locus, even a stage, for this abdication.³

The entanglements of American oil and gas companies in Equatoguinean life are unquestionably profound. Production sharing contracts between companies and

the Equatoguinean state serve as the legal gateway to nearly \$2 billion in oil-derived GDP *annually* (IMF, 2010b), effectively keeping President Obiang – Africa’s longest serving leader – in power. Hydrocarbons are essentially synonymous with Equatorial Guinea’s national economy, accounting for over 99 percent of the nation’s exports, and 98 percent of government revenues in 2008 (IMF, 2010a; Kraus, 2010; República de Guinea Ecuatorial, 2010). Corporate social responsibility programs permeate nationwide education and healthcare projects. Amidst these deep and protracted entanglements, infrastructure – here in the form of gated corporate and residential enclaves – becomes central to the industry’s framing work, abdicating liability for ‘local’ outcomes on the other side of the walls.

While part of the work of this article is to show how seemingly separate experiences of infrastructure are in fact part of the same economic and ethical picture, the analysis does not rest there. To expose connections intentionally severed by walls or sewage systems leaves intact the processes by which that separation came to be; it overlooks the considerable *work* required to produce the effect of the separation itself. By what processes are ‘the proliferation of connections’ between the enclaves and the infrastructure outside their walls framed or bracketed into convincingly lived separations (Callon, 1997: 4)? What entanglements, overflows, and internalizations are required to produce those separations? Disentanglement and framing are processes in the world that require work (Callon, 1998; Chalfin, 2006; Mitchell, 1998, 2002).

After a brief discussion of the unexpected intersection of infrastructure and responsibility in the field, I go on to explore two ethnographic sites. First, I think through the enclaves both in their capacity as residential oases of comfort and privilege, and as ring-fenced corporate spaces in which the industry can work toward a separation from the ‘corruption’ that surrounds them. In the second half of the article, I turn to Malabo II, and the ways in which new infrastructural developments ‘outside the walls’ are both entangled with the oil industry in surprising ways, and become central to the negotiation of governmental responsibility for the outcomes of becoming an oil exporter.

On responsibility and abdication

During fieldwork I was struck by the extent to which people articulated questions of responsibility for the outcomes of oil extraction and production in terms of infrastructure. Equatoguineans from diverse backgrounds, expatriate industry workers, and international activists alike all had their version: *There is so much money in Equatorial Guinea now. Where is the running water? Electricity? Healthcare? Schools?* The question and its iterations were so relentless that I even came up with shorthand in my field notes – ‘the incantation’ – which, in my imagination, was an intoned mantra: *waterelectricityschoolshealthcare, water-electricityschoolshealthcare*. Though the incantation seemed to be on everyone’s lips, the location of responsibility for this infrastructure or its absence – whether

with the government or with oil companies – depended radically on who you asked.

The harsh juxtaposition of lavish enclaves paid for by the very oil money that could not seem to change the circumstances of most people on the other side of the wall conjures two of what Foucault (1991) might call the most *logocentric* villains in the business. In various versions of the story, either evil oil companies would again be taking advantage of poor Africa, or evil African states would again be stealing bread from the mouths of their citizens. Now accustomed to such condemnation, transnational oil companies and the Equatoguinean state alike easily deflect blunt criticism, passing responsibility to the demonized other. Oil companies are ‘happy to invoke [Equatorial Guinea’s] sovereignty when pressures are placed on them to improve their human rights or social responsibility records; and yet only too happy to operate in an environment in which they could get away with just about anything’ (Kashi and Watts, 2008: 46). State actors, on the other hand, willfully sign contracts with oil companies that compromise their authority, thus taking the opportunity ‘to support unfettered capitalism while denouncing it: to bemoan their loss of power and sovereignty while contributing to that very loss’ (Palan, 2006: 190). At this impasse of mutual abdication, Equatorial Guinea’s infrastructure became a crucial site through which state actors and oil companies alike negotiated responsibility. Consider Scarlett’s story.

Originally from Conroe, Texas, Scarlett and her husband had spent 30 years in the oil industry, most recently as production manager and wife in Nigeria, before their three years in Equatorial Guinea. One afternoon I sat with Scarlett in the living room of her faux Tudor-style home on the Major Corporation compound.⁴ With most of the lights off and the air conditioning silently militating against the equatorial heat, the house felt cavernous. Decorated in safari-luxe, the home boasted exquisitely carved elephants and giraffes guarding riveted leather couches. The coffee table was piled with oversized photography books on African megafauna and an official history of the Major Corporation. Of her home in Equatorial Guinea, Scarlett explained, ‘I enjoy the infrastructure . . . water, electricity, telephone, internet, air conditioning.’ In Nigeria her house hadn’t been as nice as this, she said. Nevertheless, she had experienced ongoing guilt in Nigeria because ‘it was still so much better than what was outside the gates’. In Equatorial Guinea, Scarlett claimed not to feel a similar guilt, despite the fact that her house was both nicer than her Nigerian home and incomparable to all but the handful of luxurious government palaces outside the enclave’s walls (and even those did not always enjoy the potable hot and cold water or constant electricity of Scarlett’s home). Scarlett narrated her assuaged guilt through a particular view of the politics of infrastructure:

Here in Equatorial Guinea there is an expectation from the government that the oil companies will provide infrastructure, which is ludicrous, given the money they have. My husband was asked to build a hospital. He replied, ‘I produce oil and gas. I don’t build hospitals.’ Their response was ‘yes, but you could figure out how to do it for us’.

At a school-opening event, in front of all the children, the Minister of Education gets up and says that it's the oil companies' responsibility to provide water and latrines for schools because they're stealing our resources.

Scarlett's husband insists that his company produces oil and gas; it doesn't build hospitals. His is an insistence on disentanglement. The government, on the other hand, claims that exploitative contractual terms amounting to resource theft obligate companies to provide schools with water and latrines. There is an insistence on the entanglement of oil companies with conventionally governmental responsibility. There can be no doubt that the large American companies in Equatorial Guinea are tightly tangled not only in nationwide health and education programs, but even in the Equatoguinean legislative process itself.⁵ The webs of relations required by the marketization of hydrocarbons have deeply entangled the Equatoguinean government and American oil and gas companies to the extent that the line between the two can be difficult to distinguish in practice. Creating and policing that line of distinction, however, is a work-intensive project for companies, as they push for disentanglement through the walls and pipes of enclaved investment, while the government pushes for shared responsibility and funding for major infrastructural projects.

In his work on the 'Angola model' of transnational oil operations, Ferguson (2006: 203) writes of the extent to which oil's enclaved investment can be 'tightly integrated with the head offices of multinational corporations and metropolitan centers but sharply walled off from their own national societies'. Similarly, in his work on 'technological zones', Barry (2006: 246) has written that 'a border is expected to be established between the oil industry, which now seeks to demonstrate that it is governed according to global standards, and the local economy and society, which lie outside these borders'. A brief ethnographic consideration of Equatorial Guinea's corporate/residential enclaves suggests that these walls and borders do not demarcate already existing separations, but rather constitute boundary-making or framing projects through which the industry works furiously to perform a distinction between itself and that which is 'outside' its walls, despite their utter intercalation.

Enclaves I: *Una limpieza terrible*

After attending college in Texas, Mauricio returned home to Equatorial Guinea where he worked for the Major Corporation. Intimate both with life inside the enclave (as an employee) and outside as a Malabo resident, Mauricio explained that expatriate residents 'don't live in Malabo. They live in Houston.' Indeed *suburbs of Houston* was the emic label residents often used, with a touch of guilt and a touch of humor, to describe compound life. As one American wife put it, 'I love the fantastic houses and facilities. More than anything, I love the quiet. I feel protected. You feel like you're in the United States – our own suburb of Houston – and that's what the enclaves are for, so that the expatriates can feel like they're

at home.' While there was much on the compound to indicate that expatriate residents were not at home – Equatoguinean service personnel, the occasional goat munching well-maintained grass, a greatly diminished but still-present threat of malaria – there was also a great deal to indicate that they were.⁶ Facilities invariably displayed adjacent clocks, one set to Houston time and the other to Malabo time. English was the lingua franca of the compounds. Though not all expatriate managers were American, all had worked for American oil and gas companies long enough to have lived in Houston for years, and had come (often grudgingly) to accept a Houston-centric domestic and corporate culture. Companies facilitated the delivery of an overseas shipping container to each compound household, bringing the family piano to one home, extensive print-making equipment to another. Each home was filled with the much loved trinkets, artwork, and indispensable kitchen supplies that had followed expatriate management through many overseas postings. These personal effects supplemented high-end standardized furniture and state-of-the art KitchenAid, Cuisinart, and Sub-zero appliances, powered by 120-volt currency to accommodate American voltage settings. Satellites facilitated landline phones with Houston area codes, allowing local calls to and from the United States, wireless internet, and expansive cable offerings.

The making of an American suburban experience was also evident in the spatial layout of the enclaves. The management homes in the Endurance compound, for example, were set atop a gently sloping hillside overlooking a man-made lake. All the houses were painted either neutral grey or dusky sand. Because residents were forbidden to paint their homes, display flags or lawn ornaments of any kind, or tend to their own gardens, there was an anonymity to the built environment, to the extent that residents often joked about walking into the wrong house. Meticulous landscaping assured that no flower, palm, or blade of grass was overgrown, though a handful of towering old-growth ceiba trees had been thoughtfully spared (see Figure 1). The various compound areas – houses, the pool, the restaurant and recreation center, the office complex, the liquid natural gas plant – were connected by smooth, wide paved roads on which speed limits were strictly enforced. Security checkpoints and card-activated gates punctuated the unhurried circulation of golf carts and company-issued SUVs. In comparison, Malabo proper was claustrophobically small, essentially without greenery, and crosscut with narrow roads newly congested and dusty with oil-fueled construction projects. My Equatoguinean friends and informants who had spent any time on the compounds were often struck by the enclaves' pastoral atmosphere, nevertheless redolent with containment and control. In one particularly evocative description, an older Equatoguinean man described the scene behind the walls as *una limpieza terrible*. Literally, 'a terrible cleanliness', but perhaps more accurately a fearsome cleanliness, where fearsome can mean both terrifying and awesome.

Comings and goings from the compounds were strictly monitored. Non-residents and non-employees needed an invitation to enter, and even with an invitation had to stop at a guard house to leave their passport and a local contact number, in exchange for a badge to be visibly displayed at all times while inside the



Figure 1. Management homes on the Endurance compound.

compound. Non-resident personnel spending the night on the compound were permitted only in exceptional circumstances (family visiting from afar), and curfews – the time by which residents had to be back on the compound if they chose to leave – were observed, if not strictly enforced. The compounds were also occasionally ‘locked down’ in response to perceived geopolitical unrest, whether local or in Nigeria, Cameroon, or along various borders. Because public transportation could not circulate within the compound, local workers were picked up on company buses in the morning and dropped off again in the evening. Compound residents frequently explained their lives to me in metaphors of fishbowls and golden cages, indicating infrastructural luxury within which they felt constantly monitored and contained. This level of controlled circulation and claustrophobic monitoring, in addition to the prohibition against Equatoguinean residents, contributed to the *lived* sense that the enclaves were somehow hermetic, completely detached from and indeed fortified against the world outside their walls (Caldeira, 2000).

To be dropped outside the Endurance compound by taxi, one needed only ask the driver for ‘la planta’. A cognate with the English word ‘plant’, asking to go to ‘la planta’ was in part to ask to be taken to the factory. But for Equatoguineans ‘la planta’ is also an abbreviated reference to ‘la plantación’ or the plantation, and the

picturesque isthmus on which the massive Endurance compound now sits was a large cocoa plantation during the colonial era. The isthmus itself is known as Punta Europa – Point Europe. Along with many of Equatorial Guinea's largest plantations, it fell into disuse in the 1970s, and President Obiang eventually claimed it as his own. Through the 1980s and 1990s, small informal settlements emerged amongst the cacao trees, by that point overgrown with ferns, vines and other secondary growth. The first contract for oil-related infrastructure development on Punta Europa in the late 1990s was between Endurance's predecessor company and Obiang, to whom they paid rent as a private property owner. During the second phase of Endurance's major expansion, Obiang made a large and public display that the state was 'expropriating him too', as he officially sold his property to the government. The President's brazen display of solidarity-in-dispossession came as the dispossession of many communities in the greater Malabo area, including those who inhabited Punta Europa, began to rapidly accelerate. On their sun-down walks through the compound, expatriate employees would collect shards of pottery that dotted the ground, remnants of a recent past of habitation rendered historically distant in their minds by the ceramic material and the romance of archaeological discovery.

Despite these contemporary histories of ownership and habitation, much of the work of disentanglement is predicated on an idea of the enclave's physical isolation, remote not only from surrounding unpredictability, but also from local histories of use, ownership, and dispossession. The company town has to be a frontier, a 'zone of unmapping' wherein 'frontiers aren't just discovered at the edge; they are projects in making geographical and temporal experience' (Tsing, 2005: 29). Wendy reminisced about this frontier project to me from her spacious patio overlooking the ocean inlet that separates the Endurance compound from Malabo. The city was low and visible through the heated haze just across the water, as if a mirage. She and her husband had been coming in and out of Equatorial Guinea since 1999, by far the longest of any of the expatriate families I came to know. Her husband had come to Equatorial Guinea in 1998, and she accompanied him a year later to determine if the place was a viable living and working option for them, after other lengthy expatriate stints (as Brits) in Ecuador, Indonesia, Texas, and Los Angeles.

The project was here. It was actually on this spot. There were very little lights around here. Nothing existed. This was jungle, total jungle. So we just saw the whole thing develop. [My husband] went on a 'recce', you know, he actually did a reconnaissance mission. He actually walked through the jungle to see whether it would be suitable to start building houses, and where they would build the plant. That's how they mapped it out.

In Wendy's narrative of adventure and discovery, 'nothing existed' on Punta Europa when her husband arrived in 1998. 'It was jungle, total jungle.' Then, using a term common both in the military and survey or civil engineering, Wendy

remembered that her husband had ‘actually’ walked through the jungle on reconnaissance, mapping a place where nothing existed into the potential for houses and a methanol plant. The work of disentanglement starts in origin stories like Wendy’s.

With the land cleared of inhabitants and their histories (save for the romantic pottery shards decorating the mantle), the work of building an enclaved world can begin. And it is through exceptional infrastructure – potable hot and cold water, constant electricity, sewage and waste systems – in a country that had none of these things that disentanglement is built. Paul is a white Zimbabwean who managed the building of the Smith Corporation compound, the only major compound on Equatorial Guinea’s mainland, located just outside the city of Bata. Like many expatriates I came across in the industry, Paul’s professional background was military and paramilitary, but he had been ‘cooling his heels’ for a while, working in various tourism and game park development projects throughout Africa. He jumped at the chance to manage the building and maintenance of the Smith compound, but attested to the strenuous work required to assure that the exceptional infrastructure worked:

Opening a facility like this takes 12 months. We had teething problems: generators black out, the incinerator wouldn’t work. Potable water wasn’t really potable. We had to modify filtration systems, massive problems with AC. The camp was designed by an American company in Houston and this isn’t Houston, this is Africa. It has its own relative humidity, its own dew point.

Paul narrated to me a long year in which a Danish construction company, Spanish, Portuguese, Icelandic, and Greenlandic journeymen, along with 800 temporarily employed local Bata residents, built the camp according to a Houston-based design. ‘Africa’ interfered every step of the way, with Harmattan dust clogging the air conditioning and filtration systems. But once the international crew was able to reconcile the Houston-based design with local dew points and humidity levels, the camp became, according to Paul, ‘completely self-contained’. Having folded local weather patterns and other climatic considerations into the materiality of the infrastructure, the provision of electricity, water, sewage, garbage disposal, and even food was organized and systematized to serve those within the walls.

Electricity, water, sewage, [we] handle our own garbage, incinerate it all here. The bulk of our food comes from Houston. We ship it all in because it’s cheaper and the quality is good and it eliminated the need to deal with a highly inefficient local economy. We spend \$150 million dollars a year [in the local economy] but in a manner that doesn’t negatively impact efficiency offshore. [Our] social development program [is] one hundred percent local content.

Despite Paul’s insistence on self-containment, provisioning the compound of course relies not only on infrastructure outside the compound walls – roads,

sea ports, airports – but also on the locals who manage those resources, as well as those who come into the compound on a daily basis as employees (Caldeira, 2000). And yet in Paul's mind, these ties do not detract from the compound's self-sufficiency. Instead, the effect of these substantial investments is to 'eliminate the need to deal with a highly inefficient local economy'. Facilitated by this idea of separation, the only relationship Paul sees with the outside world is the \$150 million per year spent 'in the local economy' on social development programs. Note the incongruity here of imagining that there is something called an 'economy' in Equatorial Guinea separate from the industry which literally constitutes it (Mitchell, 2002). Corporate social responsibility becomes the detached way in which oil companies intervene, from the other side of the wall, redoubling the effect that they are somehow separate, but willing to 'help' those on the 'outside' (Shever, 2010; Zalik, 2004).

From meticulous landscaping to the monitoring of human movement, from reconnaissance missions in uninhabited jungle to construction projects that struggled to wall Houston-designed infrastructure away from its absence on the other side, the effect of this work of separation was to make the enclave into a framing device, a site of intentional disentanglement. Though ostensibly meant to solidify a line that already existed – between company and state, between Western standards and 'Africa' – the separation is in fact partial, strategic, and performative, with many people doing a tremendous amount of work to maintain its boundaries. Yet the *effect* of this work of separation is eerily successful: it allows companies – as individual employees living in Equatorial Guinea *and* as juridically dispersed institutions with shareholders and Houston central offices – to inhabit a space of uneven disentanglement, to bemoan what goes on outside their gates, as if they have nothing to do with it, when in fact their industry constitutes 98 percent of Equatorial Guinea's national economy. Insofar as the enclaves enclose not only residential life but also daily office life, they are a spatial representation of the extent to which the industry claims to ring-fence corporate practices away from an external business environment widely regarded by the industry as unpredictable, personalistic, and corrupt. It is to this enclaved corporate culture that I now turn.

Enclaves II: Zonal capitalism

In my 14 months of fieldwork in Equatorial Guinea, the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Energy (MMIE) remained jarringly empty. Located in a Lebanese-built apartment building on the airport road, the Ministry was floor after floor of empty hallways, plastic-covered furniture apparently unused, and outdated concession maps. Seated at desks that were completely bare save for computers (no papers, files, calendars), secretaries chatted happily to one another, windows open to let in the breeze necessitated by electricity outages. The functionaries were often impossible to find in their offices. This was a radical contrast to the office environments I found on the oil compounds: large buildings with open floor plans crowded with cubicles and swivel office chairs; graphs, charts, and posters touting

company slogans and achievements covered the walls; enormous white board calendars and schedules were animated by uncannily legible handwriting and meaningfully placed magnets; stacks of paper, books, labeled binders, file cabinets, computers, printers, and fax machines crowded office desks and shelving; the thrum of phones and photocopying; the hustle and bustle to and fro between personalized work spaces with photos of families, inspirational quotes, and sports team memorabilia, was constant.

The infrastructure necessary for constant electricity, wireless internet, running water, and Houston area codes was not, of course, only for the domestic comfort of expatriate employees, but also facilitated the movement of oil and gas to market. Moreover, the industry points to the ostensible infrastructural 'ring fence' within which corporate operations take place as spatial and procedural proof that they are separate from the 'corruption' outside their walls (Barry, 2006; Ferguson, 2006; Reno, 2001). Considered in their commercial capacity, these enclaves in fact functioned as Ong's 'noncontiguous zones' (2006) or Winters's 'zonal capitalism' (2006). Separate business practices ranged from the independent telecommunications systems, to private ports, to differential laws, regulations, and taxation regimes.⁷ The means of production too were freed from state involvement: companies were permitted the duty-free importation of all equipment, materials, machinery, supplies and components (Cameron and Palan, 2004; MacLachlan and Aguilar, 1998; Sklair, 1993).

Justifications for these separate business practices stretched beyond arguments for efficiency and profit maximization. Corporate processes 'within' the enclave cloaked themselves in discursive and procedural regimes of the global, the standard, the compliant, the objective, to be differentiated from the arbitrary, the personalistic, the incomprehensibly local beyond their walls. As Barry (2006: 250) puts it, 'the formation of technological zones has become critical to the constitution of a distinction between global/Western political and economic forms, and their non-Western others'. Reno (2001: 4) has gone so far as to say that 'the private enclave exploitation of resources is a salutary imposition of market discipline and standards of efficiency on corrupt economies'. While I disagree with Reno's assertion for the extent to which it succumbs to the ostensible separation between the enclave and its outside, his is a prescient summary of the performativity of the enclave, the *desire* and work toward creating a line between compliant and corrupt, American and African. And yet, considered ethnographically, zonal capitalism in Equatorial Guinea was made through deep entanglements with that from which it claimed to be separate. The Smith Corporation's country manager described the exceptional status his company enjoyed as follows:

There's so much revenue generated. Corruption and inefficiency exist in spades in West Africa. The fact that we generate so much revenue, we have direct contacts in [the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Energy] and tremendous influence. If there are difficulties – [given our] \$700,000 per day [rig] rental – negative impact by customs, immigration, [we are] able to make a few phone calls and it gets cleared away.

In other words, we use our global, compliant standards to call our highly placed connections at the Ministry of Mines and ask them to please grant us the favor of calling the lowly customs official who is holding our needed technology at the port, and telling him to snap out of it. This is how we differentiate ourselves from the ‘corruption that exists in spades in West Africa’. Thus, while Barry (2006) is right that the formation of technological zones is critical to the making of distinctions between us and them, compliant and corrupt, the work of making those distinctions cannot be characterized by separation alone, but must also include the Spanish word that locals used most often to explain the relationship between the oil industry and local power structures: *compinchados* – accomplices.⁸ As one Equatoguinean lawyer put it:

Obiang gives the companies free reign, and in turn they protect his regime. They operate on the margins of local law but it doesn't affect them. This theme of having their own telecommunications system, it guarantees that the government cannot interfere. This is on the margins of current legality and of the country's interests. They are commercial relations in which the industry closes its eyes to what is obviously illegal according to international law in order to do business with the regime. [...] The government has tacitly renounced control of the activities of these companies. As they renounce control, company activities damage the interests of the population.

The deep complicities between oil companies and those in power here stretch from the state's granting of corporate sovereignty within the enclaves to companies' willful blind eye to blatant illegalities. And yet the *effect* to which Barry and Ferguson point – a border between the industry and the economy and society thought to be ‘outside’ it – is pervasive. Despite the sticky entanglements through which hydrocarbons get to market, the infrastructural separation allows a consequential inhabitation of a partition. Looking out at Equatorial Guinea from the enclave, expatriates told me about how locals should really learn to stop burning their small piles of garbage, even as gas flares blazed constantly around us; or they paused in security buildings, struck by questions of responsibility and framing that Hurricane Ike made momentarily visible.

Responsibility outside the walls

All framing creates overflowing and all disentanglement provides the opportunity for new entanglement. (Callon, 1998: 39)

In 2004, an American congressional subcommittee tasked with investigating money laundering and foreign corruption released a report accusing Riggs Bank (a Washington, DC firm) and President Obiang of theft of public oil revenue and money laundering on a grand scale. The report also implicated American oil companies, revealing large payments into the offshore accounts of highly placed

	A	B	C	D
	COMPANY	PROJECT	LOCATION	TOTAL COST
1	Grupo FADEM	Construction sheet metal roof, Loza Barracks, Moganda	Bata	47,836,800
2	TECNOBAT GE	Construction Minascom Regional Offices	Bata	221,479,301
3	MANSO EXP	Land clearance	Bata	200,461,750
4	MANSO EXP	Maintenance lawn & esplanade	Bata	65,759,600
5	ACCESSEGE	Restoration of Mongomo Courthouse	Mongomo	94,110,665
6	SOGEA	Reconditioning Mbini - Nume Highway	Mbini	351,540,068
7	SOGEA	Rehab. of sidewalks & drainage	Mongomo	1,878,572,494
8	PREGUIS S.L.	Refurb. of offices of Nat. Fed. of School & Univ. Sports	Malabo	78,433,400
9	EMPOCSA	Reconditioning of Nkoo-Ntoma barracks esplanade	Bata	674,600,000
10	Const. MARIN	Refurbishment of Governor's residence	Luba	32,402,595
11	SOGECO	Reconditioning terrain La Paz Stadium	Malabo	198,535,040
12	EMPOCSA	Reconditioning terrain Nsok Nzomo Barracks	Nsok Nzomo	112,000,000
13	Bur. VERITAS	Malabo station terminal	Malabo	27,280,000
14	SOGECO	Widening Malabo-Airport highway, & turnpikes	Malabo	2,327,799,953
15	ISOLUIX WAT	Upgrading gas turbine power station to 20 megawatts	Malabo	10,053,266,513
16	FILYAL	Enlargement of Acacio Mañe School	Malabo	37,854,934
17	GRAL WORK	Enlargement of airport's aircraft parking facilities	Bata	7,262,187,500
18	BOUYGUES	Enlargement of aircraft parking facilities	Malabo	768,696,682
19	BOUYGUES	Bridge-widening on Malabo - Basacato Highway	Malabo	9,832,775,585
20	INCAT	Repair & widening of Old Bridge	Malabo	6,127,313,500
21	SOGECO	Asphalt access to garbage dump on Rebola highway	Malabo	61,898,200
22	ECOCSA	Asphalt Ngolo - Asonga Highway	Bata	4,817,772,400
23	SOGECO	Asphalt La Paz Street in Malabo & 20 meter bridge	Malabo	996,873,461
24	SOGEA	Asphalt seaside promenade Lote 1	Bata	2,085,747,815
25	SOGECO	Asphalt Rebola's main street & square	Rebola	260,535,040
26	SOGECO	Asphalt streets in Los Angeles Neighborhood	Malabo	222,004,794

Figure 2. EG Government report detailing the specifications and costs (in Central African Francs) of infrastructure projects.

Equatoguineans (Coleman and Levin, 2004). The marketization of oil requires entanglements from the mundane to the cinematic.

In response to what became known as the Riggs report, the Equatoguinean state released a report of its own, entitled ‘Statement of the People & Government of Equatorial Guinea in Response to the Report on Riggs Bank’ (República de Guinea Ecuatorial, 2005). After a scant 19 pages of explanation, 66 pages of the

statement went on to offer charts and photographs documenting infrastructure investment as the 'real' site of the missing billions (Figure 2).

If, as Callon claims, marketization demands the cutting of certain ties, and the internalization of others, one would think that the construction of private enclaves would enable companies to abdicate responsibility for the state of infrastructure provision outside their walls, even as it demanded complicity in dispossession and illicit payments to Equatoguinean dignitaries. Yet there are other, unexpected overflows that directly implicate the oil industry in Malabo's wider infrastructural development, or lack thereof. Below, through an ethnographic consideration of Malabo II, I explore the ways that infrastructure became a terrain in which the state negotiated responsibility for the outcomes of oil extraction, with ensuing and unexpected entanglements of oil and gas companies in Malabo's infrastructure provision.

The Equatoguinean government's response to the Riggs Bank report offered innumerable and costly infrastructure projects as a defense against charges of theft and money laundering; the money had not been stolen or invested for personal gain, rather it had been spent in the building and maintenance of public infrastructure. Despite the dubiousness of many of the report's claims, the long-term lack of certain kinds of infrastructure in Malabo is arguably eclipsed today by the breakneck speed at which *other* kinds of infrastructure are being built. Highways, high-rises, governmental palaces, airports, sea ports, national stadiums, and national oil company headquarters appear in vast swaths of new construction. Equatoguinean friends and I often joked that the national motto – Unity, Peace, and Justice – should be changed to Unity, Concrete, and Glass.⁹

Construction booms in newly resource-rich states are a well-documented phenomenon. Often pejoratively labeled 'white elephants' for their unique combination of grandiosity and impracticality, critics deride prestige projects as irresponsible in the face of populations who watch aging infrastructure crumble around them as oil wealth builds airports from which they will never leave (Apter, 2005; Coronil, 1997; Vitalis, 2007; Watts, 2008). Following the Riggs Bank report, however, I would like to suggest here that white elephants are in fact central to the negotiation of governmental responsibility, negotiations in which the projects' grandiosity and impracticality are not necessarily liabilities.

After education abroad, and extensive travel in Europe and the United States, Alberto came home to Equatorial Guinea to work as a human resources manager with the Smith Corporation. Noting that the company had been in neighboring Gabon for 18 years, Alberto commented that Equatorial Guinea had not learned from places that had made the same mistakes before:

I don't believe that the state has learned. For example, the coastal promenade (*paseo marítimo*) ... is being extended. It has cost a fortune, but the value that it brings the population is infinitesimal compared to the value that could be produced by investment in the university to train technicians. This same concrete jungle went up in Gabon, in Nigeria, and it's the same thing we're doing here. There's concrete

everywhere. The tendency is unstoppable: concrete, skyscraper, concrete, skyscraper. The only concrete that is good in my opinion is roads. All the rest – airports in the interior, promenades – it's all a waste. When you start investigating the wasteful use of resources, go to Gabon and look at the train. It's awfully wasteful, but mine isn't a common opinion. People like visible infrastructure. It's because we're a colonized people. We want to portray ourselves as having achieved what they have in other parts of the world. If we look like New York we feel very happy. I'm not happy. I'd rather have the university well-funded and the schools and the scholarships and the hospitals and then small houses. No more concrete.

While Alberto's comparative frame – to Gabon and Nigeria – was unavailable at earlier times and places of oil development, the substance of his critique is as old as the infrastructure development patterns he points to. Despite his insistence that his is not a common opinion, Alberto comes from a long line of critics who characterize these empty construction booms as mimetic, hollow versions of the trappings of 'modernity', sedimenting the given place in a mess of semi-finished palaces destined more to crumble than to improve the quality of life of the majority (Coronil, 1997; Vitalis, 2007; Watts, 2001). Alternatively, we might read these construction booms through Ferguson's (2006: 161) argument about the politics of membership, by which the appearance of architecturally modern buildings wouldn't merely be empty gesture or mimicry, but the pressing of a claim 'to the political and social rights of full membership' in a global club visually defined by the shared infrastructure of skyscrapers and superhighways.

While an instantaneous modernity (albeit it one modeled more after Abu Dhabi than New York) as well as assertions of global membership were both at work in Equatorial Guinea's infrastructure boom, the Riggs report and beyond suggest that the rapid construction of conspicuous infrastructure also plays a central role in high-profile international wrangling over what should be done with oil money in impoverished places. Pressure on oil-exporting state apparatuses to combat 'corruption' and foment 'social investment' of oil monies has intensified over time as the social, environmental and political ravages of becoming an oil exporter grow clearer. New infrastructure in Malabo then becomes a site of visible investment (Apter, 2005), a site to which the government – accused of squandering or outright stealing oil money – can gesture to show where the money has gone. Just as the enclave offers transnational oil companies a stage on which to negotiate responsibility through the performance of removal and superiority, oil-funded public infrastructure development offers the Equatoguinean state a similar stage on which to negotiate their role in infrastructural violence. Stefán, a resident of the impoverished Campo Yaounde settlement, explained, 'What matters to the state is the outcome. There will be a time when people will ask questions and they need to be able to point to a stadium, a road.'

As built responsibility, the conspicuousness of white elephant projects and the haste with which they go up – often cited as evidence of their hollowness – are in fact integral to their function. Compared to water and electricity systems, for

instance, prestigious buildings go up quickly. Past the expertise required for their construction, no other expertise is required to make them 'work'. Once constructed, the work they do is to be seen (Apter, 2005). That many of Equatorial Guinea's new prestigious buildings were in fact without pipes to facilitate running water, sewage systems, or electrical wiring was neither visible from the outside nor central to the immediate work required of them by the Equatoguinean state. Oil and gas companies are also involved in these white elephants in unexpected ways as the case of Malabo II (*Malabo Dos*) highlights well.

Malabo II

When I first arrived in Equatorial Guinea in summer 2006, Malabo II was a swath of second-growth jungle and overgrown cacao plantations, with one new red-dirt road through the middle. It was also a series of billboards around town on which the president's face was superimposed over a photo-collage of idyllic, deterritorialized residential and financial districts. He gazed meaningfully out into the distance/future, and the caption read, *Este hombre tiene un sueño*, this man has a dream. When I returned in fall 2007, Malabo II was hectares of cleared land, dotted with bulldozers. When I left in fall 2008 it was a series of paved roads with a handful of large buildings, none of which were occupied, though cars had begun to circulate on the new roads. GEPetrol (the national oil company) had erected a 20-storey headquarters; China Dalian was building 100+ unit apartment buildings; and many other architectural growths were in various stages of completion. During my 14 months in Equatorial Guinea, watching Malabo II spring up was like watching time-lapse photography of a plant growing from seed to flower – it's a process with which you're familiar, but one that looks altogether strange in fast-forward.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the spectacular rate of construction, Malabo II was without water, sewage, or electricity systems. It was a series of empty, glass-skinned buildings sitting in the middle of recently felled jungle. As such, Malabo II not only constituted a framing project for governmental responsibility for the investment of oil monies, but also offered a medium through which to rethink the materialities and histories entailed in infrastructural violence – what assemblage of who, what, and how might be responsible for the persistent absence of water, electricity, and sewage systems?

Considered processually, buildings like those in Figure 3 require one contract with one construction company, and a matter of months to construct. On the other hand, city-wide water or electricity grids (let alone national systems) require a much wider range of expertise – from the bacteriological to the distributive, engineering to chemistry – and hence a wider range of contracts, a longer time frame, and far more logistical coordination. A Spanish city planner working for a firm with multiple contracts in Malabo and Malabo II explained to me some of the intricacies of these processes. There was a company with a contract to build a water



Figure 3. New building in Malabo II.

system for Malabo, he explained, but ‘right now they’re only placing the tubes at the initial point of capture, the river’:

Then there’s the work of treatment, of purification, to take out the sand. There are mechanical, chemical, and bacteriological filtration processes. Then there has to be a storage system, with capacity for two days of treated water. [...] Here, one company is doing the tubes, but I don’t know where they’re capturing water or treating it. The water that comes to the city comes directly from the river without treatment.

To understand the complexities of contracting water or electricity systems is to think through Equatorial Guinea’s history, in which ‘public service’ infrastructure has long been a patchwork of private or enclaved development, set up either to facilitate the extraction, production and export of commodities – enslaved people, palm oil, cacao, or petroleum – or to provision the colonial and postcolonial elite. Pieced together with private contracts and private interests, throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods infrastructure has been a profitable locus of what Bayart (1993: 70) calls ‘the symbiosis between the worlds of administration and business’, or Mbembé (2001: 78) ‘the privatization of sovereignty’. Since independence, remuneration for government work in Equatorial Guinea – from police to ministers – has come not in the form of salary but in the opportunity provided by

the position to accumulate connections and wealth. In the same time period, contracts with foreign firms or development organizations have more reliably produced kickbacks than the more elusive final product they promise, especially when it comes to systemic projects such as water and electricity, which entail expansive and overlaid networks of pipes and wires, and require diverse and protracted forms of expertise and maintenance. Because projects like this take so long, and rely on external expertise which in turn relies on fickle and ever-changing international relationships, precisely the kinds of infrastructure needed to alleviate the violence at issue here are also the kinds most vulnerable to false starts, incompletions, and incompatibilities. As the Spanish city planner cited above continued:

Instead of having a single contract for someone to install a water system, they have the Chinese, the Arabs over here, mixed companies. At this moment it's chaos. One company comes in to lay asphalt, and then [another] comes to break it and put in water tubes. Sometimes, electricity tubes cross water tubes and they're different companies so no company wants to repair anything. In the end there's no solution and there's chaos. It's a delicate problem because there are no international standards. Electrical installations by Chinese companies are very different than those done by the Egyptians or the Americans. Chinese measure in millimeters, Americans in inches. But you can't mix technology or measuring systems if you want water to run. Over time the Russians have been here, the Chinese, the French, the Spanish, now the Egyptians too. Because of political relationships between nations, favored contractors change over time. One company lays one cable. Later another company lays another cable. They cross ... Another company comes in to fix it and another one collapses. It's a repeating cycle.

This account of crossed cables and incompatible measuring systems offers a material history of the fickle involvement of global superpowers in Equatorial Guinea – the Spanish as the former colonial power; the French as the regional colonial power; the Chinese and the Russians, who invested heavily in the post independence, Cold War era. Today the Chinese are back along with Arab Contractors, Egypt's largest parastatal construction firm. The planner's rhetorical archaeology of infrastructure technologies indexes changing colonial and postcolonial relationships in which infrastructure is first a vehicle for, and later the ruins of, fickle geopolitical solidarities. This is a long history of entanglement in which American oil companies, despite their best efforts at framing their involvement otherwise, are only the most recent participants.

As oil companies work so furiously to enclave their exceptional infrastructure, and abdicate responsibility for its absence outside the walls, there are overflows. Contracts signed with the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in fact *require* oil and gas companies to 'construct a prestigious building' in Malabo II, 'using modern and permanent materials'. Article 6.22 of a sample contract between Equatorial Guinea and an oil company, entitled *Premises*, reads in part: 'Upon the first Commercial Discovery, the Contractor shall [...] construct a prestigious building for its offices

in Equatorial Guinea using modern and permanent materials and of an appropriate size and design as shall be approved by the Ministry' (MMIE, 2008: 26). *Congosa* (gossip) around Malabo among both expatriates and Equatoguineans was that the requirements of Article 6.22 were more specific than those in the document to which I have had access. Multiple informants told me, for example, that 'appropriate size and design as shall be approved by the Ministry' required that each 'prestigious building' be minimally six storeys high. This was plainly ludicrous for most transnational companies with small E.G. subsidiaries and rotating subcontractors, often with 10 or fewer in-country employees, but no matter, one of my expatriate management informants explained:

Companies are required by law to have a presence in Malabo II, even if they don't need it, and even if they certainly don't need six floors. If they don't build it themselves, someone, the Chinese, will build it for them, and they will have to pay for it.

This privatized development plan extends not only to the building of superfluous company headquarters, but also to the financing, renting, and eventual ownership of the buildings. Once construction costs have been recovered by the company, the state then owns the building and the company inhabiting it will pay rent to the state.

All installations, facilities, goods, equipment, materials, or land acquired by the Contractor for Petroleum Operations shall become property of the State from the point at which their costs are fully recovered by the Contractor. [...] Upon termination, rescission, or cancellation of this Contract, for any reason whatsoever, in relation to all or part of the contract area, the ownership of said installations, facilities, goods, equipment, materials, or land, ... and any other items acquired and used for Petroleum Operations shall become the sole property of the State and shall be conveyed directly to it. (MMIE, 2008: 43)

Without any other large productive sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, tourism), the government has subsidized and subcontracted the transnational oil industry to build them a new city. Where the enclave involved costly investments and actions toward cutting certain ties – not only to systems of food, water, and electricity provision outside the walls, but also to the daily practices of Equatoguinean governance and commerce – these investments have also necessitated the internalization of other ties, including the development of Malabo II. All disentanglement, Callon reminds us in the quotation at the beginning of this section, provides the opportunity for new entanglement. From the abdication of responsibility for wider infrastructure provision that is so clear in the enclave, in Malabo II oil companies (or the construction companies they subcontract) effectively become reluctant architects and city planners, entangled not only in the proliferating presence of six-storey buildings of modern and permanent material, but also in the renewed absence of water, electricity, and sewage systems to serve the new city.

More broadly still, contractually enforced participation in the Malabo II project entangles American oil companies in much longer histories and archaeologies of infrastructure that foreign experts – engineers, capitalists, development practitioners – have left behind. Article 6.22 and Malabo II incontrovertibly belie the oil industry's work of separation from and abnegation of responsibility for infrastructural violence in Equatorial Guinea today.

Conclusion

Overflowing is the rule. [. . .] Framing – when present at all – is a rare and expensive outcome; in short, is very costly to set up. [. . .] Instead of regarding framing as something that happens of itself, and overflows as a kind of accident which must be put right, overflows are the rule and framing is a fragile, artificial result based on substantial investments. (Callon, 1998: 252)

Starting from a familiar juxtaposition of luxurious private infrastructure enclaved away from haphazard infrastructure beyond its walls, I began by suggesting that where its presence is possible, basic infrastructure's absence is a form of violence. But Equatorial Guinea's oil enclaves present us with another form of disconnection that has been my focus here: the industry's furious work toward the abdication of responsibility for life 'outside' their walls. Starting from Callon's work on disentanglement, framing, and overflow in processes of marketization, I have suggested that the disentanglement at work in the enclaves – of industry liability from local processes in which it is deeply entangled – is itself a form of violence. *Compinchado* in histories and ongoing struggles over dispossession, private accumulation of public funds, and wider urban planning projects including Malabo II, the Equatoguinean government and American oil and gas companies routinely use infrastructure as both a material and symbolic frame in which to abdicate responsibility, and pass it to the other. Infrastructure becomes central to boundary-making projects that attempt to externalize a line between public and private, government and companies. It is a line not easily distinguished in practice, but constructed in every securitized enclave of zonal capitalism. The industry's entanglements in the Malabo II project belie this particular framing, however. To draw on Callon's formulation, Malabo II is an overflow, a tie that has to be internalized in order to successfully cut other entanglements. As the government uses Malabo II and other (often spectral) construction projects to combat charges of corruption, they re-tie companies and their new six-storey buildings into ongoing histories of infrastructural violence. Crossed wires and conflicting pipe measurements entangle companies in the very violence from which they have worked so hard to wall themselves off – no potable running water and sporadic electricity in a country of 600,000 inhabitants where per capita income is on par with Italy.

To follow Callon's formulation of entanglement and disentanglement offers ethnographers not only empirical and theoretical insight, but methodological

guidance as well. If overflows are the rule, and framing is fragile and work-intensive, Callon's approach encourages us to trace the work that makes framing possible: start from the proliferation of connections – in this case between oil and gas companies and Equatoguinean people, environments, and histories – and then follow the work through which those connections are framed or bracketed into the separations that facilitate particular transactions, here, the passage of oil and gas to market. The abdication of responsibility is a separation that is particularly central to the ongoing marketization of oil and gas. Responsibility is an entanglement, a relationship that prevents oil companies from escaping the web of relations in which their products are extracted, produced, shipped and sold. With responsibility intact, 'the framing is never over. The debt cannot be settled' (Callon, 1998: 19). The violence at issue is in the intentional abdication of this responsibility – the fantasy of full framing or a settled debt. But even as oil reliably and profitably gets to market, overflows spill out from enclave walls and internalizations haunt gleaming buildings, leaving both the violence of disentanglement and the debts of marketization incomplete and unsettled.

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Notes

1. My research focuses on large American oil and gas companies in Equatorial Guinea. There is also substantial Chinese and French hydrocarbon investment, among others, but the American companies are the major players.
2. I use 'capital deployment' here to specify that both Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and capital investment calculations are not sufficient to measure the quantity and diversity of hydrocarbon-related investment in Equatorial Guinea. In FDI alone (a narrow calculation based on balance of payment statistics and business registers; see UNCTAD, 2010; Zhan, 2006), Equatorial Guinea had received \$13.676 billion by 2009. Assuming a stasis in FDI numbers (which is cautious given major pending projects including a second natural gas train), FDI will top \$17 billion by FY 2011 (Kraus, 2010; UNCTAD, 2010, and personal communication). Capital deployment then widens this statistic out to include both capital investment (in the purchase of equipment and buildings) and operating costs, in which rig rental alone requires upwards of one million dollars *per day* for each rig. Finally, it is my intention that this estimated figure include the millions of dollars paid into offshore accounts of powerful Equatoguineans (see Coleman and Levin, 2004).

3. Throughout the article I use 'infrastructure' broadly to refer not only to the 'hard' infrastructure of roads, water supply, sewers, forms of energy provision, telecommunications, and waste management, but also to refer to the 'soft' infrastructure of public education, health care, libraries, etc. This usage is consistent with the ways locals and expatriates used the term in the field, where they were just as likely to refer to the lack of adequate school buildings, hospitals and clinics, or running water as 'infrastructural problems'.
4. I refer to all people and companies throughout the article with pseudonyms. I refer to the American companies on which my research focuses as the Major, Smith, Endurance, and Regal Corporations.
5. Production Sharing Contracts between the Equatoguinean state and operating companies contain sweeping fiscal stability clauses, which stipulate that the legal and fiscal regimes in place in the supply site *at the time the contract is signed* – environmental law, labor law, tax codes – will not change over the life of the contract. If those fiscal and legal regimes *do* change, and if those changes reduce companies' profit margins, the state is contractually obligated to indemnify the corporation. Fiscal stability clauses limit the normal prerogatives of any legislature, including the ability to enact and issue environmental, labor, and other regulatory laws (Radon, in Humphreys et al., 2007).
6. I focus here on the experiences of expatriate management who lived for three-year stretches in the compound's most luxurious homes. Other expatriate workers – mostly Filipino – rotated in and out of the compound's less luxurious residential facilities, and did not have the opportunity to cultivate 'homes' in the same way. They were also provided with separate facilities for eating and recreation. Porteus (1970, 1974) and Vitalis (2007) chronicle these spatialized, racialized hierarchies, as do I (Appel, 2011).
7. From the late 1990s through at least 2005, the major US companies brought all their imported assets – from the technical to the domestic – through the Malabo and Bata ports. When that proved to be too cumbersome, as port officials would hold their goods at sea and demand extortionate sums of money, the Endurance corporation built their own port, through which they were permitted to import some, though not all, of their inputs. The relevant regulations and enforcement are constantly in flux and subject to negotiation. Suffice it to say that the oil industry, its proliferating subcontractors, and attendant construction industry greatly increase traffic at local ports, even as they begin to build the private infrastructure that allows them to bypass national infrastructure.
8. A reviewer helpfully points out that *compinchados* has rich inferential meanings beyond 'accomplices'. While the term suggests a superficially equal relationship, it is derived from *pinche*, or helper, and thus implies inequality between the parties. This is certainly the case in Equatorial Guinea where it was widely agreed upon that the government was merely the oil companies' *pinche*.
9. *Unidad, Paz, y Justicia* becomes *Unidad, Hormigón, y Cristál*.

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