Capital, the State, and Environmental Pollution in Nigeria

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Abstract
This research discusses the environmental pollution by the capital in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria and identifies two historical agents that have the potential to harmonize their social power through a common language that may create a new social and political agency. We argue that the working class and the community-based social movements are necessary but not sufficient agents of transformation in the Nigerian oil-dependent capitalist economy. The cooperation between the global and local sites of resistance is an imperative: a synergy and deliberate action by the conglomerate of trade unions, community-based social movements, nongovernmental organizations, local and global activists, nurtures the potential to transform the capitalist domination, exploitation, and expropriation in Nigeria. Using secondary literature sources, we re-visit the conversation on the role of capital and the pollution of environment in Nigeria through the concept of “Movement of Movements”.

Keywords
racial capitalism, the state, environmental pollution and agents

Introduction
This research discusses the capital and its role in the pollution of the environment of the host communities in Nigeria. The Marxist perspectives about capital is useful because it provided the philosophical basis for understanding class dynamics, the primacy of matter over the ideological, cultural, and other human preoccupations. The idea of the proletariat agency in the transformation of capitalist exploitation lies in the Marxist perspective of capital. The black radical philosophy took its early roots in the Hegelian and Marxist thoughts but later distinguish itself as a different school of thought. It criticizes Marxist postulations for failure to take into account other structures of exploitation and domination meted by the capitalist system, especially race and gender.

The pollution of the environment; in the air, on land and in the sea examined. Significant pollution has been meted on the host communities. The oil prospecting and mining activities generate two key contradictions; the workers, who work because they need to survive, and the community-based social movements that emerged to challenge the degradation of the environment of the host communities by the capital. These two historical agents as identified have the potential to transform the capitalist exploitation and expropriation in Nigeria.

This research equally discusses the responses of capital and state to this working class and community-based social movements. These responses are both of “carrot and stick”: the incentives and disincentives. The environmental assessment and efforts toward restitution and the amnesty program to address the question of militancy in the region are cases of incentives. The stick approach manifest in the state and capital’s manipulation of differences, which weaken communal solidarity, as the state and capital intensifies the regime of exploitation of resource, environmental degradation, and capital accumulation.

However, the limitation of these movements lies in their failure to harmonize the sites of the struggle. This, we contend that if consensus is forged between the victims, a potential new social and political agency would develop in the region that could improve the situation through the formation of “movement of movements.” This “movement of movements” is an idea of harmonizing the global and local sites of resistance to exploitation and expropriation. This approach, if adopted we argue has a better prospect of mitigating deep inequality, exploitation, and expropriation meted by the state and capital on both the working class and the communities hosting capitalist firms in Nigeria.

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The Marxist and the Black Radical's Perspectives on Capitalism and the “Movement of Movements”

The black radical tradition and the Marxist are both philosophies committed to the transformation of the condition of oppressed people. Both traditions canvass for the transformation of a capitalist society to a condition where production and consumption could assume human character. However, they differ in some specific analytical focus, especially on the structure of exploitation and expropriation. Marx sees the exploitation in a capitalist society as being perpetrated along class line, while the black radical tradition sees the exploitation of people and the expropriation of resources as essentially a racial enterprise. Race is seen by the Cedric Robinson not only as a form of differences among people of their skin color but the instrumentalization of differences of all kinds (ethnic, gender, or any form of social status) to structure exploitation and expropriation by the capital in cohort with the state.

The Marxist Perspective

Marx and Engels remain some of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century European radical philosophy. Their contribution laid the contemporary basis for shaping the entire post-World War II ideological polemics that characterized the international system of those moments. Until the end of the cold wars, most humans’ political communities were organized directly or indirectly under a socialist philosophy championed by both the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and China.

V. I. Lenin considers class as a group of people who differ from one another by the place they occupy within a definite system of social production. Lukacs (1972, p. 55) corroborates that the division in the society, especially the capitalist society is evidently class based. Class is the position an individual or a group occupies in the production system. Both Marx and Engels argue that human kind produce their history basically under a definite assumption and condition. Among these conditions, the economic factor is ultimately the most decisive. Invariably, other factors like politics, culture, ideology, and other human preoccupation play a useful role but not the decisive one (Robinson, 2000). Similarly, Marx maintains that national liberation is a precondition for proletariat internationalism. Consequently, the destruction and transformation of the bourgeois economic, political, military, and ideological hegemony can be revolutionized and transformed through the proletariat agency. The proletariat, who supplies the labor power is identified as the key historical agent of change in a capitalist system. Today, the labor is constantly being subjected to the pressures of capital through threats of relocation to areas with labor abundance. The capacity of the capital to disperse production to lower the cost of labor and confront workers solidarity is enormous.

The constant penchant of the capital for the dispersal of production, also exposes the capital to the new dynamics of labor solidarity, where workers sometimes leverage on this new opportunity to enlarge their constituency to push state agents and the capital for improved labor policies and welfare (Selwyn, 2013, p. 49).

In the modern times, Marx (1867,1887, 1995, pp. 555 and 556) argues that all the wealth generated in the society goes into the coffers of the capitalist, where he or she pays rent to land owners, wages to the laborers, tax to the relevant authorities and tithe to its collectors. The capitalists then keep the largest and disproportionate remaining part of the wealth created by the society to themselves. By this social action, the capitalist could be referred to as the owner of the wealth of the community, even when there is no law that expressly states that. These new manufacturers in the late feudal times, established themselves at the inland points beyond the influence of the old feudal authorities and their guilds.

Marx concluded that the triumph of the bourgeois society over feudalism was attained through the state agency as the instrument of class struggle. To this extent, Marx considers the state as very necessary for bourgeois rule. Since the historical sequence of the role of state in a bourgeois rule is clear, both bourgeois rule and the state are necessary for the transformation of the society into a new production structure that is social and human in character.

The Black Radical Perspective

The black radical tradition developed incrementally from the actions of slaves and later the people of color in the Caribbean, the new world (United States of America) and the colonies spread around the world (Kelley, 2017; Robinson, 2000). The black radical thinking began to gain popularity with the famous works of WEB Du Bois, C.L.R James, Marcus Garvey, and Richard Wright. Most of these scholars are substantially influenced by the works of Hegel, Marx, and Engels. They agree to the contention of societal inequality but the inequality to the black radical tradition is not structured along class line but race. This opinion is echoed in Du Bois famous proclamation that the 20th century problem was that of the color line. This assertion is also reinforced in the debate between WEB Du Bois and Mr. Booker Washington about racial upliftment (Horne, 1986; Robinson, 1983, 2000). Horne (1986, p. 225) maintains that Du Bois in the later years of his intellectual and labor career held the contention that wage differentials between the black and white working class was the material basis of racism.

In 1983, Cedric Robinson, arguing along the black radical tradition in his seminal contribution identified two key challenges with the debate about inequality in a capitalist system. First, he agrees with the black radical scholars that the capitalist system is engendered along racial lines not much of class, but that race is poorly understood by the black radical thinkers, which required historical re-definition. Race is a
structure of power or a means of structuring power through differences (Kelley, 2017). It is the instrumentalization of differences and the employment of such differences to promote exclusionary practices (political, social, and economic) to structure exploitation of labor and expropriation of resources, as well as support capital accumulation (Robinson, 2000). Race is not new to the European society; it has over the ages been the organizing principle of the society and race has indeed been part of the entire European civilization experience. To corroborate this, Robinson (2000, p. 10) argues that capitalism is not a revolutionary opposite of feudalism, but “the extension of the feudal social relations into the tapestry of modern social, political and economic capitalist relations.” Berberoglu (1994, p. 69) confirms this contention that patriarchy and racial oppression predate capitalism. He maintains that the capitalist system upon its rise in the 16th century, simply incorporated these patriarchal and racial habits into its mode of accumulation. This system of capitalist order Kelley (2017) argues evolved to produce in the modern world, racial capitalism, which depends on violence, slavery, imperialism, and genocide. To look at race from color line, Robinson argues, is the most rudimentary demonstration of poor historical knowledge of the evolution of racism in the western society.

Secondly, the Marxist philosophy is flawed on some key premises, especially the primacy of matter and the revolutionary agency of the working class. Cedric Robinson in his book the “Black Marxism: the making of the black radical tradition,” identified the limits of Marxist radical thoughts and re-historicized the meaning of race as a cultural tool. This culture plays the same and equal role with the economic factor as decisive in a capitalist economy. Arguably, Robinson challenged this assertion and maintains that both the materials, the ideological system and culture, play an equal and important role in shaping capitalism and the dialectical opposition to the system in all respects. According to Robinson, Marx alluded that national liberation is a precondition to proletarian internationalism and consequently, the destruction of the bourgeois economic, political, military, and ideological hegemony. In this respect, Marx sees the proletariat as the key historical agent of change in a capitalist system.

The rise of industrial proletariat was a product of the activities of the industrial bourgeoisie. It was under the bourgeois state that the proletariat gained recognition and national existence. Marx suggested that it is under this same modern means of production that the proletariat would develop the means for their revolutionary liberation. Also, Marxist theory generalizes the economic mode of reality over the entire range of human history (Robinson, 2000).

Meyerson (2000) refutes Robinson’s claims and insisted that he has mistaken Marx’s class analysis for the analysis of capitalism. This is so because Marx did not exclusively put class as the only primary determinant of domination and exploitation, rather, Marx argues that class is the primary structural determinant. Therefore, there exist only racist and sexist ideologies, or racial and gendered division of labor. Ideology and division of labor are vehicles in service of class-rule. Class-rule is a form of class struggle.

**Understanding the Movement of Movements**

Martha Gimenez has lamented over how it is a fashion in contemporary studies of inequality to criticize the inadequacy of Marxist contributions, especially as scholars seek alternative theoretical perspectives to address the inadequacies. Most often, these scholars tend to forget that the political and theoretical priorities of Marx and Engels differ considerably from the contemporary concerns, which modern social scientists experience and interrogate. Class, which Marx had analyzed is not an ideology supporting the legitimate oppression of a group of people, rather, it simply denotes an exploitative relation between people, which is mediated by their relations to the means of production. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels could not have written everything about inequality in a capitalist system considering the dynamic character of the phenomenon. To this end, Neither Marx Nor Engels committed their time to the in-depth research on gender, race, or other structures of oppression in a capitalist system that could have satisfied today’s critics of Marxism (Gimenez, 2001, p. 24).

However, both race and class, as structures of domination, overlap, and diverge, with the possibility of the oppressed people experiencing both class and racial oppression. This analysis is epitomized in the works of Berberoglu (1994), where he examined the underlying class forces that led to gender and racial division of labor among the U.S. working class. The intricate linkage between gender and racial oppression to capital accumulation was clearly identified.

Arguably, humans generally are assemblage of social relations and they do indeed leave their lives at the core of the intersection of a number of unequal social relations based on hierarchically interrelated structures, which cumulatively constitute the historical particularity of the capitalist mode of production and reproduction. Gender and race as structures of oppression should not be dismissed as false consciousness, they are indeed experienced and lived social realities. However, Gimenez (2001, p. 26) argues that race like other structures of oppression cannot be understood adequately if it is analyzed outside class or in isolation from the realities of class exploitation. There is a sense in what we can suggest conveniently that race intersects class in a number of production settings. Intersectionality is a description of the micro-level process, which systems of oppression is carried out and how each individual and group occupies a social place within the interlocking structure of the oppression (Collins, 1997, p. 74). Everyone, especially the oppressed social categories in a capitalist system is located at the intersection of numerous social structures. This debunks the one-sided abstraction of the nature of human exploitation and expropriation. Neither class nor race is sufficient to explain the structure of oppression.
The intersection of the class with race offers better nuances in understanding how oppressed people are subjected to exploitation and expropriation in a capitalist economy (Gimenez, 2001, p. 28).

Arguably, the series of contradictions created by the capitalist production system has in turn created a new desire among activists, the nongovernmental organization (NGO), social movements, and trade unions for common action and solidarity. However, the united activities have produced a kind of “movement of movements,” which has the potentials to forge a new dialectical relationship between the global and the local sites of resistance (Ashman, 2004, p. 147).

The universalist movement is the early social movements focused on equality of the oppressed like the former Bolsheviks of USSR or the Chinese communist socialist movements. This category of resistance resonates with the Marxist philosophy. The universalist is seen by new movements as essentially characterized by the politics of domination and not emancipation. The “New” social movements, which emerged in the 1960s are inextricably linked to identity-based politics and the manipulation of social differences, like Feminist Movements and the Black Life Matter (BLM). The new social movement is the antithesis of the universalist movement (Ashman, 2004, p. 148).

However, neither the universalist approach to social movement nor the particularistic new movement is sufficient to transform the structures of domination in a capitalist society. Gills (2000, p. 138) emphasized the dynamic shift in the social matrix of social movements, as he identifies the new shift as a form of political agency beyond the politics of identity and differences. There is a great potential in a form of collective political identity and agency that could transform the exploitation of labor and expropriation of resources as well as mitigate extreme social inequality in a capitalist society. Harvey (2001, pp. 197 and 200) and Harvey and Williams (1995) maintain that social movements, trade union organizations, civil society groups, activists both local and global as well as the NGOs have forged a common language around (human rights, the right to life, and the right to protest) to melt into a broader movement that would wield universal and emancipatory impact on the capitalist system. These united activities, Ashman (2004, p. 147) argues has produced “movement of movements”, which has completely transformed the politics of opposition to inequality and also, harmonizes the global and local sites of resistance.

**The State Agency in the Capitalist System**

The state in a capitalist society reproduces differentiations through the process of stratification by reforms like the structural adjustment policies popularized by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is precisely under these reforms that race is reproduced. This policy deepens poverty, social disparity and divisions; ethnic or gender, as they encourage growth without equitable distribution of resources among social groups. This is because differences present themselves in a capitalist setting as gender, nationality, or ethnicity, whereas in actual sense, it is argued they are racial differences (McCarthy, 2016). The violence, domination, and dispossession through expropriation unleashed by capitalism on the vulnerable individuals and groups, social, economic, and political in a capitalist society is coordinated in part, through the instrumentality of race (Fraser, 2018). The labor on the other hand is racialized into paid, immigrant, and unpaid labor. The family labor for instance is unwaged. The unwaged or unpaid labor also captures the reproductive role of women, who essentially produce the future work force needed to sustain capitalism. Capitalism encourages privatization of the household and patriarchy, which deepens dispossession of women from the proceeds of the unpaid reproductive labor and other family members’ labor, who equally are unwaged laborers (Kelley, 2017).

The state plays a fundamental role in defining who is a worker, citizen, immigrant, slave, indentured servant, national, international, domestic, or native (Stoler, 1989) all of which are aspects of the social production and reproduction of differences. Race precisely emerged from this hierarchical division of status, which facilitates and shapes both exploitation and expropriation. This fabrication and differentiating hierarchies serve very well and so much, the mechanisms of capital accumulation and its expansion (Fraser, 2018).

Fraser argues further that while the local and small-scale capital around the world suffer the confiscation through expropriation and exploitation, the developed core has not been spared. The workers are divided along black–white communities and citizen–immigrant labor. These categorizations are ostensibly created to ensure effective exploitation of the white labor, black labor, and immigrant labor through the cheap offer of labor reward. The surplus value, which the capitalist calls profit is confiscated and directed to capital circuit (Fraser, 2018). The capitalist and the state agencies enjoy free riding on public good like land and the natural resources therein. This free riding increases their rate of returns on capital to the detriment of the dispossessed.

**Environmental Pollution in Nigeria**

The real or actual quantity of oil spills or in general, pollution induced by the exploration and exploitation of oil resource since the discovery of the hydrocarbon deposits in Nigeria is very difficult to establish. This is so because of the multi-source through which this pollution could occur and the associated risk that could facilitate it; like pipe corrosion, criminal vandalization of the pipeline, leaks from the pipe joints and heads at extraction, transportation, and the storage in depots (Nriagu et al., 2016).

Oil and gas are the most significant resources in the Nigerian economy. The sector accounts for almost 85% of
the federal government’s revenues and 95% of its foreign exchange earnings (Cayford, 1996, p. 184; Obi, 2009). The global capitalist firms that pervade the Nigerian oil fields include but not limited to the Exxon Mobil, Total, Eni oil, formally Agip, Shell Royal Dutch, Indian oil corporation, Chinese national Petroleum Corporation, Chevron-Texaco, and other oil companies (Obi, 2009).

The exploration and exploitation activities of these multinational oil firms compromise environmental standards. The environmental quality of the inhabitants of the oil producing Niger Delta areas is a significant index that contributes to the life expectancy of the people. Pulido (2017, p. 525) calls attention to the problematization of the quality of environment. Just almost exactly as the General Motors polluted Flint, Michigan, a predominantly black population (minority), (Pulido, 2017), the indigenous people of the oil-rich Niger Delta are predominantly minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, they suffer similar fate.

Poor environmental quality places the indigenous peoples’ health at a disadvantage relative to the rest of the social groups in Nigeria. The extraction of the oil degrades the environment and exposes the indigenous communities playing host to the oil firms to deleterious pollution (land, water, and air). It is important to note that the indigenous people of the oil-rich Niger Delta Areas depend on the environment for their daily livelihood (Akpan, 2010; Eregha & Irughe, 2009). As the oil and gas mining activities expand, environmental degradation and pollution increases. These shrink and dwindle spaces available for farming, fishing, traditional sites, and many land-dependent sundry activities (Ukeje, 2001).

This implies that the rate of relative poverty among the land-dependent people will increase in the affected areas. Aluko (2004) argues that poor people are vulnerable to environmental changes, because exclusionary practices of all form (political, social, or economic), leave these exploited and expropriated people and locations with few choices, when it comes to survival. The environmental changes in the Niger Delta equally respond to the general climatic changes radically because of the intensive oil and gas extraction. These Corporations and the Nigerian state have little concern for environmental standards or the quality of environment (land, water, or in the air).

The land and water of the region of Nigeria is exposed to huge oil spillage. Between 1976 and 2001 alone, it is estimated that about 6,817 oil spills occurred involving approximately, 3 million barrel of crude oil in the region (Eregha & Irughe, 2009). The Janelov report projected that the aggregate quantity of the oil spillage in the Niger Delta region over the period of 50 years is between 9 and 13 million barrels. This implies that an estimated volume of 1.5 million tons of oil spill annually (Nriagu et al., 2016).

This fact was corroborated by the oil spill intelligence report presented from the 1992 survey, which showed that Shell Corporation alone recorded 14% of its global oil spills from the Nigerian oil fields, which accounts for about 26 out of the 67 world oil spills officially acknowledged by Shell Company for a decade (1982–1992). The company has spilled approximately, 1.6 million gallons in those 26 incidences (Ukeje, 2001).

The fresh drinking water in the areas is heavily polluted. The canalization done by the oil firms in the region usually pollute the fresh water sources with salty water. This form of pollution usually occurs when oil firms build waterways to link the oil fields to the production facilities (UNDP reports, 2006 cited in Eregha & Irughe, 2009). The seasonal floods also spread these oil spills to farm lands and significant areas occupied by people. This has tremendous health consequences and such effects are poorly documented and remains largely unknown (Nriagu et al., 2016). In fact, petroleum mineral produces aromatic hydrocarbons like naphthalene, benzene, and pyrene. It also produces asphaltene like phenols, acids, and ketones, as well as resins like sulfoxide and quinolines. These contaminants pollute the entire environment of the Niger delta region (Ite et al., 2013, p. 79). This contamination was made manifest when in 2012, the land and waters of the Ogoni communities were tested. The pollution level was discovered to be significant and was up to about 10% with benzene. This is considered dangerous and high by both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). This pollution level Okorie (2018) argues has predisposes the communities to serious risk of cancer.

Gas flaring is one of the major sources of acid rain that induces the destruction of biodiversity. In the Niger delta areas, there are about 123 flaring sites, which makes Nigeria one of the greatest emitter of greenhouse gas in Africa (Uyigue & Agho, 2007 cited in Aregha & Irughe, 2009), and the gas flaring generates 45.8 billion Kilowatts of heat per day, burning on a deep crude gas reserve of about 1.8 billion cubic feet in the region (Aaron, 2006 cited in Aregha & Irughe, 2009). In fact, the oil companies operating in the Nigerian Niger Delta region emit 35 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per Annum and 12 million tones of methane gas every year (Cayford, 1996). The host communities are exposed to these tremendous wastes, which are poorly managed and most at times, victims are neglected. This is precisely a natural path for racial capitalism, argues Pellow (2007). The ecology of resource extraction, processing, and disposal are a constituent part of economic formations. The poor attention given to the host communities and the poor waste management practices indulged by the capital and state are fundamental habits familiar to racial capitalism (Pulido, 2017).

The Politics of Resistance: Oil Workers Union and the Community-Based Social Movements

Both the workers unions and the community-based social movements are contradiction created by the capitalist economy in Nigeria. The working class is not a darling of the
capitalist entrepreneurs, but their functional utility compels a form of relationship based on convenience. The worker needs the capital as a means of survival, as much as the capitalists need the worker to ensure capital accumulation. On the other hand, the activities of the community-based social movements are a direct reaction to the expropriation exerted on the land resources hitherto inhabited by the local host communities. The environmental degradation has direct impact as it dwindles the available space for their economic, social, and other sundry activities. This is quite apart from the health risk associated with the environmental pollution.

The Oil Workers Union and the Struggle for Improved Social and Economic Condition in Nigeria

The establishment of oil industry as a result of the discovery of oil and gas resources in Nigeria led to the birth of the oil industry working class. The transnational oil firms recruited and still recruits the blue-collar and white-collar workers. The former functions to meet the lower and middle man power requirement of the capital and the later, meets the managerial and high skilled demands of the capital. This is an aspect of capitalist contradiction. The capital resents worker agitation, yet, would take great pleasure in the labor power, which the worker supplies to service and sustain the capitalist system.

The blue-collar workers formed the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas workers of Nigeria (NUPENG), with about 100 branches and 10,000 membership spread across the oil industry in Nigeria. The white-collar workers on the other hand established the Petroleum and Natural Gas Worker, Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN). They equally maintain approximately 20,000 members, with about 120 branches spread across the oil firms in Nigeria (Houeland, 2015). These workers are constraint from forging a common solidarity front by the capital, but are discipline in a way that each, leans toward different ideological orientation. NUPENG nurtures and expresses a more radical orientation and are much more readily tuned to resisting the capital and the state for its interest primarily and the general public to an extent. PENGASSAN are more relates social Democrats, leaning toward conservativism, less volatile but effective in their own right (Houeland, 2015).

This division is deepened by some deliberate actions of the state and capital to ensure that internal solidarity among the workers is weakened. This internal conflict reflects constantly among the staff and the union hierarchy. It is a visible experience where one sees clearly the collaboration between the radical senior staff and the junior staff of the oil workers on one hand, and the visible split among the white-collar cadre (those who reject any form of alliance or conspiracy with the foreign expatriates and those who compromise, especially the Nigerian supervisors that allow racism toward rig workers) on the other hand. These categories of staff that compromise with the capitalist firm or the oil firms management are often considered by their colleagues as traitors or “Black Sheep” (Turner, 1986, p. 45).

Another government antic against the Unions to obstruct their attempt to forge a common front and solidarity is dabbling into the unionist leadership selection process and relating with them thereto. The state supports puppet leaders who are willing to compromise the interest of the working class and frustrate those considered to be radical in ideological disposition. For instance, the relationship between the then Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) leader, Pascal Bafyau, and the then Military Junta of General Ibrahim Babangida was good, as the Unions generally, remain in-active even in the face of the annulment of June 12 presidential election, where every organized social movement where registering displeasure and demonstrating various levels of social action (Ihovbhere, 1997, p. 86). On the other hand, the state always goes to the extent of obtaining court injunctions to obstruct the emergence of leaders considered to be popular, radical and who express the wish of their followership. The federal government for instance secured a court order rejecting leaderships supported by the union members and foisted the government’s choice on unions. During the Second republic, the government prevented J. E Dubre from participating in the NLC congress in the march 1984 convention in Enugu, South East Nigeria. The following year, the federal Military Government of the then General Buhari promulgated the antisabotage decree No. 35 targeting workers and their unions (Turner, 1986, p. 45).

All these obstructions did not completely stop the Unions from forging ahead as an agency of change. NUPENG had severally opposed the state for adopting policies considered to be antimasses. During the June 12 annulment, even when the NLC called off the strike earlier embarked in support of prodemocracy campaigners, NUPENG refused to comply and continued, citing sliding exchange rates, fuel scarcity and general economic and political crises as the bases of its actions (Ihovbhere, 1997). NUPENG also challenged the constitutional conference organized by the then Military government of General Buhari. They demanded the release of arrested activists, critics, journalists and politicians, failure of which it threatened to engage in mobilization, protests, and strike actions. True to the threat, on the 4th of July, 1994, the union ordered a sit-at-home strike indefinitely to members pending the resolution of the issues at stake with the relevant authorities (Ihovbhere, 1997, p. 90).

Although the unions have tried to express themselves as an agency committed to transforming the situation under capitalist economy in Nigeria, they are challenged for not collaborating effectively with other social movements or constituencies in such a noble effort. For instance, Aborisade (2010, p. 32) lamented the absence of solidarity or organized alliance between the oil workers (NUPENG and PENGASSAN) with the local host communities in the oil producing region in Nigeria. This lack of solidarity Aborisade
argues, encourages the state and capitalist agents to intensify domination, state terror, and expropriation on both social constituencies (p. 33). From these preceding historical facts, new approach is imperative, if we are to experience a new social condition in the entire Nigerian political economy generally or specifically the oil-rich Niger delta region.

**Community-Based Social Movements and Militancy in the Oil Producing Region**

The commercial discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1958 signaled the dawn of extensive degradation of the environment of the indigenous people playing host to the hydrocarbon resources. Since then, they expressed concern over the dwindling space for their social and economic activities and the pollution of the remaining space in the environment argues (Ukeje, 2001). This expression of concerns triggered the struggle against both the transnational capital operating in the region and the state. Ukeje (2001) maintains that the indigenous communities hosting the oil-rich soil and water have severely continued to express unhappiness in the 1970s and 1980s by writing petitions, initiating litigations, sponsoring adverts drawing attention to their plights, and sending delegations to meet with the state and the capitalist firms operating in the region. These approaches Ukeje insisted were not sustainable considering the diverse landscape of dissatisfaction. Therefore, events took a new twist in the 1990s owing to the pressure felt by the indigenous communities from the expansion of new oil fields and intensification of resources extraction and the attendant pollution. The implications to this were the dwindling space for cultural, social, and economic activities. The remaining space is daily being invaded with poisonous pollutants reducing fish stock, animal and plant species hitherto available to the communities. The ranks of the unemployed in the communities swelled with peasant that suffered complex dispossession. For instance, in Ogoni land, three local government areas (Khana, Gokona, and Tai-Eleme) hold 120 people per square mile. This is approximately half a million people on 404 square mile, a population density considered very high even in the world’s demographic distribution (Cayford, 1996). This plethora of unpleasant events provided the impetus for active community-based mobilization toward the establishment of social movements. This social movements become significant historical agent in the demand for transformation of the plights and condition of the indigenous people of the oil-rich Niger delta region of Nigeria.

Isaac Idaka Boro in 1966 formed the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) as a militant group drawing strength and inspiration from community-based support and authority. Even though his activities were obliterated in 12 days, yet, this event became significant as the water shed for violent agitation employed by the indigenous people in reaction to the reign of real and perceived injustices, which they felt (Ukeje, 2001). In the 1990s, Ken Saro Wiwa became the leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). The key demands of the organization that culminated in the declaration of the “Ogoni Bill of Right” enjoyed wide appeal within the Ogoni communities and served as an example for other communities in the region. The Ogoni demanded equity in access to power, environmental restoration, the control of resources of the land and waters of the community and the right to self-determination. These demands were repulsive to the interest of transnational capital and its expansion, as well as the local power elites who engage in domestic accumulation. To this end, the MOSOP emerged in 1993 as a powerful social movement representing the interest of the Ogoni communities (Obi, 1997).

Consequent upon the successes of the Ogoni people, the Ijaw ethnic nationality decided to re-invent the earlier struggle commenced by Isaac Boro, hence in 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) held an inaugural conference in Kaima, Bayelsa state Nigeria. Accordingly, on December 11, 1998, the Kaima declaration was proclaimed (Ukeje, 2001). Just like the “Ogoni Bill of Right,” the “Kaima Declaration” adopted the right to self-determination, resource control, and environmental sustainability. It added the preservation of Ijaw culture and stressed its significance and fundamentals to the Ijaw existence. The IYC became a powerful social movement. Ukeje (2001) argues that the entire region suffers from authority crisis. The indigenous people have lost confidence in government for providing authority. They therefore relocated to the primary affinity and built traditional social networks, re-invent the various subcultural links, with which they have been historically connected. These social movements place high value on the links, and it is these community-based organizations that emerge as historical agents and are engaged in mobilization toward mass actions; MOSOP, IYC, and NDVF to mention but a few. They employ history, culture, and tradition as tools to articulate their identity and foster the relocation and transfer of authority as well as loyalty to be community-based.

Historically, Soremekun and Obi (1993) cited by Obi (1997) posit that the indigenous people of the Niger delta educated themselves through these traditional social networks to the fact that the Nigerian state is a product of colonialism and was integrated into the global economy as a source of raw materials and market for finished goods from Europe. That the processes involved people who were hitherto different and were at different levels of pre-capitalist developments. These community-based social movements are not only educated about the past but also the present. That the centralized character of the erstwhile colonial authority empowered the majority ethnic nationalities; hence, they employed such numerical superiority as a tool for domination of all sorts. The numerically less advantage groups to which the Niger delta ethnic nationalities belonged, suffered social, political, and economic domination. The majority groups dominated the cash crop-based economy, enjoyed the control of central authority and proceeded to
extend such domination to the new oil economy. Ethnicity becomes instrumental for mobilization to access power and resources. This fact is corroborated by Eberlein (2006) cited in Houeland (2015) that ethnicity is a major tool, serving as the organizing principle around which, the claims to resources sovereignty in the Niger Delta is coordinated.

In this way, Obi (1997) maintains that the minority ethnic groups are conscientized to the social reality that they have lost out in the power and resources game. Therefore, the minority nationalities have no option but to use the same ethnicity to push back and make demands for self-determination, state creation, and agitate for minority rights from the numerically dominant groups.

The State and Capital’s Response to the Diverse Landscape of Opposition

In this way, it is clear that race intersects class as most of these community members are also workers with the preponderant capital that traverse the region exploring and exploiting resources. Accordingly, the struggle of both workers and the community-based social movements is not a story of their exclusive exposure to state and capital’s wrath only. Some progress has been attained, especially the capital’s and the state’s responses to the activities of both the community-based social movements and the working class.

The state and capital respond in a way that is problem-solving in character, instead of transforming the condition or employing emancipatory approach. In 1992 and 2000 respectively, the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADC) was established and later renamed Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) charged with the responsibility of rehabilitating the oil producing areas and also addressing the issues associated with ecological problems in the region. Around 1.5% to 3% of government’s monthly revenue from the states of the region is committed to meeting the goals of the commission. As at 1998, the 3% represented 13.6 billion Naira (Omotola, 2007). This is essentially an institutional approach to solving the problem. Even though the Urhobo National Association in North America (UNANA) lamented that despite this huge sum allocated every month, corruption has impeded the effective utilization of the resources. This, they argue is evident by the preponderant rising and persistent violent conflict in the region (Omotola, 2007, p. 84).

The Federal Government in 2006, because of the intense agitation by the community-based social movements and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as environmental activists, initiated an independent study to understand the degree of environmental degradation caused by oil exploration and exploitation. This independent study was carried out by the United Nations environmental Program (UNEP) to establish the degree of damage through pollution done to the Ogoniland. This study is part of the pre-condition for the settlement and peaceful reconciliation between the Ogoni people, Shell Corporation and the federal government of Nigeria. At the end of the study in 2011, the report indicated among other things that it could take up to 30 years to rehabilitate the Ogoni land back to its initial potential at the cost of one billion U.S. dollars (Prince & Augustine, 2015).

In 2009, the Niger Delta Amnesty Program (NDAP) was proclaimed by the government of President Musa Yaradua. The administration aimed to mitigate the high level of economic sabotage and violent militant activities that pervaded the region. The violence was a demonstration of the grievances of the people of the region who over the years had been agitating over conglomerate of issues associated with environmental security as well as political and economic concerns (Okonofua, 2016, p. 2). The NDAP is focused to achieve disarmament, demobilization, and the re-integration of repentant former violent militants into the military formation or the civil society. Pugel (2009) sees the disarmament and the re-integration as a process where ex-combatants who previously took arms in defiance to the state monopoly of violence are pardoned with the goal and hope of preventing re-occurrence of the same situation.

The workers have also achieved landmark results through the mobilization of workers and people for mass action through their unions, NUPENG and PENGASSAN. Government have yielded to several pressures and demands ranging from workers’ welfare to reduction in petroleum products’ price in the country.

The people of the Niger Delta area not just exposed to environmental pollution but also exploitation. The communities enjoy employment quota as indigenous people and work for the oil firms. In this way, some of the indigenous people are not just exploited but their environment degraded and the resources expropriated. This gave rise to diverse landscape of resistance in the region. The most significant being coordinated by the workers, which is class based and the community-based social movements, which is shaped by their traditions and culture. This culture is expressed in languages, ethnicities, and historical ancestry. The state and capital tend to employ these traditional characteristics as a type of division. To Robinson (2000), when any form of difference is instrumentalized, race relations will essentially ensue. The instrumentalization of difference in Niger Delta is clearly exemplified by the violent conflicts in Warri, where the state recognized one ethnic group with the status of indigenousness (Itsekiri) against another ethnic group, considered as non-indigenous (Ijaw). Also, the Shell Company gave the same exhausted waste pipes to two difference communities in the region. Both of these scenarios generated violent conflicts among the community groups that weaken intercommunal solidarity as both the state and capital consolidate over their grip of the resources. This instrumentalization of differences is precisely what Robinson considers as mitigating communal solidarity and promoting exclusionary practices that breeds race relations. The responses of both
state and capital had been that of carrot and stick. However, such approach is still very far from genuine transformation of the plight of the exploited workers and the oppressed communities, who are severely exposed to these pollutions. The way out of the woods may lie significantly in transforming the structures of domination, exploitation, and expropriation, which the capitalist and the state elites have imposed on the working class and the indigenous people.

**Toward an Emancipatory Approach: The Movement of Movements Approach**

The literature on oil economy and the need to transform capitalist’s domination in Nigeria is replete with the neglect of the role of the working class (Aborisade, 2010, p. 32; Ihonvbere, 1997, p. 79). The absence of solidarity between different social constituencies committed to oppose capitalist domination and exploitation of resources cannot be over-emphasized (Aborisade, 2010, p. 32). He maintains that the control of the oil resources through the collaboration between the oil workers and the communities hosting the oil would be a better political and economic scenario (p. 33). Even though these struggles staged by the community-based social movements and unions overlap, and also diverge. It overlaps where some of the community members are also union members, especially the blue-collar ranks. They are divergent where the workers employ legitimate peaceful means of resistance as much as the community-based social movements hybridize both the peaceful and violent means to transform the condition of the people in the region.

This point of convergence between the workers and community is precisely where solidarity could be explored. The struggle to genuinely transform the environmental security, exploitation, and expropriation meted in the region by both the state and capital can move forward if the resistance structure harmonizes the global civil society groups, NGOs, and environmental activists with the local resistance. This approach has the potential to transform the intense exploitation and expropriation of the region as well as mitigate environmental insecurity.

Although these agencies are present and have contributed in different capacities through various means to mitigate the rate of damage to the environment, the environmental politics of the Niger Delta, the local resistance group, the community-based social movements, and the workers have shown great potentials as key agents of transformation in the region.

Ikelegbe (2001) identified various environmental and civil right groups that have been participating in the struggle to transform exploitation and expropriation in Nigeria. The environment activist groups include but not limited to; Niger Delta and environmental Rescue Group (ND-HERO), Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Oil Watch Group, Ijaw Council for Human Rights (ICHR), and Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL). Other civil right groups include the Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), and the Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP). These organizations have not been very assertive owing to its constant harassment by the Nigerian state. These challenges call for the deliberate step to establish a great movement of movements that could harmonize the global and local sites of resistance to domination, exploitation, expropriation, and the transformation of the associated social structures that support such social malaise to the advantage of capital accumulation.

**Conclusion**

This research explored the Marxist, the black radical tradition and the concept of movement of movements to explain the relationship between the capital and state with the community-based social movements, workers, civil society, transnational environmental activist groups and international non-governmental organizations in the capitalist-oriented oil economy in Nigeria. The domination, exploitation, and expropriation could be transformed, but the trade Unionists and the community-based social movements are necessary, yet insufficient to perform the role. We argue that the effective harmonization of the global and local sites of resistance to such exploitative and expropriative tendencies, hold the potential to mitigate the excessive accumulation of capital to the detriment of the environment, health care, and social condition of the oppressed people of the oil-rich Niger Delta region and indeed the oppressed masses in Nigeria.

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