

# Anthropology Book Forum

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**OMOLADE ADUNBI**, 2022, *Enclaves of exception: Special economic zones and extractive practices in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 256 pp., ISBN 9780253059567.

**Keywords:** Enclaves of Exception; Special Economic Zones; Extractive Practices in Nigeria; technological innovation; 'social death' of the environment.

*Enclaves of Exception: Special Economic Zones and Extractive Practices in Nigeria* is an ethnographic book which addresses, in an intriguing and didactic way, the complex network of social, political, state, and economic actors involved in Nigeria's oil extraction. Omolade Adunbi's work has focused on the processes of oil extraction in Nigeria. In his previous book, "Oil Wealth and Insurgency in Nigeria" (2015), he explored the ways in which NGOs, activist groups and community organizers invoke ancestral property to defend land disputes, justify disruptive actions and organize against oil corporations. The argument of ancestral land and insurgents returns in *Enclaves of Exception* from different perspectives, in which these actors become part of the "Special Economic Zones" (SEZ) without opposing the existence of the space of production.

This book is divided into six chapters, a Preface, Introduction and Conclusion, which progressively present the complex political, economic, sociocultural and historical layers that constitute the Niger Delta region as enclaves of exception. In the Preface, Adunbi addresses the advances in China's operations on the African continent, and their partnership involves infrastructure development in exchange for natural resources' extraction.

In the Introduction, the author masterfully illustrates the complexity of oil extraction and refining processes. Such processes take place through partnership between Nigeria and China in implementing free trade zones (FTZ) - Ogun-Guangdong FTZ and Lekki FTZ - and developing artisanal refineries managed by members of local communities (before insurgents against the government), who operate without government regulation. Both forms of extraction make up what the author defined as "enclaves of exception," which are economic zones that operate based on technological innovations, creating spaces of sovereignty, innovation, and environment social death.

The purpose of these enclaves is to extract economic value not only from oil extraction but from natural, human and creative resources, free of charge, in order to increase oil extraction and

refining. Both extraction models - FTZ and artisanal refineries - are a reflection of Nigeria's painful insertion into the neoliberal global economy, in this description. The result has been a trail of destruction left by the failed promise of oil as an engine of development and social prosperity. Some former insurgents in the region, who once challenged the implementation of extractive processes in the area in an attempt to appropriate their ancestral heritage, began to engage in oil extraction through what Adunbi called "crude recapture." That is, former insurgents take oil from pipelines operated by the state and its corporate allies using innovative techniques to refine it before it is sold. However, the impact of these zones' creation can be observed in forced migration of population where the FTZ and artisanal refineries were implemented, in reduction of arable land and in what the author called the social death of environment - extreme environmental degradation.

In the first chapter, the author conceptually defines what an enclave of exception is by ethnographically demonstrating the actions of the consortium between Chinese companies, the Nigerian government, their collaborators, and the young and former insurgents who work in artisanal refineries. The chapter's argument makes two concomitant moves, that of presenting enclaves as one of the neo-liberal developed models within the scope of SEZs and that of expanding and complexifying the scope of the SEZ based on new forms of interaction among enclave actors.

The second chapter presents how the Chinese state consortium in the Ogun-Guangdong FTZ and Lekki FTZ has operated in partnership with the Nigerian state. The Chinese consortium has developed infrastructure for the transport, refining and export of oil produced in the FTZs, which is called "infrastructure of convenience," as part of the agreement for modernization and local economic development. However, this infrastructure has resulted in violence, socioeconomic inequalities, and land dispossession for the population around FTZs. Infrastructure of convenience is based on Chinese state intervention in an economic model focused on job creation and industrialization. This Chinese development model adopts the importation of qualified Chinese labor to occupy high-level jobs in the FTZ's, leaving Nigerians with underemployment.

The third chapter addresses sovereignty of FZT facilities, which is granted by the Nigerian state so that Chinese corporations can manage the territory where companies are located and regulate oil extraction. That is, by ceding sovereignty to these Chinese corporations, the Nigerian State transferred to them the legislative, police/armed force and economic administration of the territories. Adunbi, when narrating his visits to the FTZs, describes an organized security network, which controlled people's access to the place through armed police. For this reason, the FZT's were considered as "this place is not Nigeria", since local administration, territorial protection and wealth produced belonged to the corporations. The corporations are, therefore, new self-regulated sovereignties in the Nigerian territory, acting independently of government. The FZT area is where all commercial transactions begin and end, with profits not necessarily belonging to the Nigerian

state. For this reason, the author argues that sovereignty has become a commodity in the context of searching for Nigerian economic prosperity. That is, the Nigerian government “sold” its sovereignty in exchange for an ideal of development.

The fifth chapter discusses negative sociocultural impacts of refineries on Niger Delta streams and negative impacts on the quality of life. Refineries’ multiple functions in reinventing technologies and mimicking government production structure - when producing oil - demonstrate their inherent complexity and, finally, as actors that deepen and intensify environment’s death. Accordingly, refineries occupy the limbo between the free trade zone – because of administrative functioning - distribution of kerosene to the community and promotion of living conditions’ extreme degradation, thus highlighting how development practices can be contradictory.

The sixth chapter focus on how environment death is inherent to enclaves of exception, as the environment becomes the source of profit in the rapid development model. On one hand, FTZs are part of the economic prosperity sham touted by the Chinese development model that will take Nigeria out of the 19th century (p. 258). On the other hand, refineries, by entering the neoliberal system of exploitation that imitates state organization, end up undermining the quality of life of the very community to which they belong.

The great potential of this ethnography is to present the complexity of Nigerian neoliberalism and the new configurations brought about by the Chinese economic model and the subtlety of understanding the nuances of claiming land as ancestral land. This work is one of the most relevant academic texts for understanding the contemporary transformations of capitalism and exploitation models underway on the African continent, due to its conceptual, theoretical, and ethnographic depth and richness.

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