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Mapping Toxic Coloniality: Perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America

Conference call for abstracts at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands
7-8 November 2024

Agriculture, mining, and large-scale industries initiated in the colonial period have caused persistent and pernicious forms of toxicity. The use of pesticides, the disposal of industrial waste, and oil spills have transformed environments and impaired multispecies health. What is more, material toxicity has produced toxic socio-political and cultural-epistemic relationships, through extraction, exploitation, competition, and conflict. This conference aims to generate an understanding of how these forms of toxicity are carried over into the present as **toxic coloniality**. Centring on questions of environmental in/justice, agency in the Anthropocene, and unequal relationships between the Global North and the Global South, we ask what toxic coloniality entails.

Building on critical interdisciplinary scholarship, such as Max Liboiron's *Pollution Is Colonialism* (2021), Farhana Sultana's work on 'Climate Coloniality' (2022), Marco Armiero's *Wasteocene* (2021), and Gabrielle Hecht's *Residual Governance* (2023), we seek to trace the history of toxic coloniality. Through case studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we ask **what the specific colonial roots of toxicity are** and how toxicity has been refracted and has intensified in the postcolonial period.

The work of scholars such as Nancy Langston, particularly *Toxic Bodies* (2010), has done much to theorise toxicity, but the question whether toxicity is experienced, lived, and known differently outside of the Euro-American context still begs attention. In their groundbreaking edited volume *Toxic Timescapes* (2023), Simone Müller and May-Brith Ohman Nielsen acknowledge the intersectionality of time, space, and bodies in toxic exposure. Through historically informed case studies, we seek to map how exposure to toxicity has changed over time. More importantly, we focus on **how toxicity has been experienced variously** in different localities and in different periods.

In foregrounding the **lived experiences of toxic coloniality**, we acknowledge the role played by multispecies actors and assemblages. We invite empirically grounded case studies that help us understand toxic coloniality in particular places. Authors are encouraged to focus on localities in **Africa, Asia, and Latin America**, and they are invited to explore themes such as monoculture agriculture on plantations, oil drilling, mining, and extractive industries, and waste disposal.





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The conference invites interdisciplinary contributions from **historians, geographers, political scientists, anthropologists, literary scholars, artists, and people working in the environmental humanities**. Through a focus on the materialities and epistemologies of toxicity, our historical approach seeks to deconstruct and rethink the shifting meanings and manifestations of toxicities in the twenty-first century. Our premise is that more closely studying these histories of toxicity and coloniality is crucial in responding to the planetary climate crisis.

This conference has received funding from the University of Groningen and the European Research Council (ERC Starting Grant no. 101039920 AFREXTRACT). Accommodation costs will be covered for speakers, and some travel funds might be available if your paper is accepted.

The proceedings of this conference will be published in either an edited volume or a special issue.

Please send your abstracts (500 words) to Dr Iva Peša i.pesa@rug.nl by **15 January 2024**. If your abstract has been accepted (notification by 1 February 2024), you will be asked to submit a draft paper of 5,000 words by **30 September 2024**.

Organising committee University of Groningen:
Iva Peša, Jabulani Shaba, Antonio Ferraz de Oliveira

International organising committee:
Antoine Acker (University of Geneva), Michela Coletta (University of Warwick), Benoît Henriët (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

