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Call for papers for a conference on 11-12 July, 2024 in Port Harcourt

## Oil, Environment, and Lifeworlds in the Niger Delta: Environmental History Approaches

Oil drilling has a long history in the Niger Delta. After oil was discovered in commercial quantities in Oloibiri in 1956, the petroleum industry has transformed environments and lifeworlds across the Niger Delta. Dead fish in the rivers after an oil spill, devastated agricultural fields, militant activism, but also practices of *kepofire* are all part of this environmental history.

Anthropologists, historians, geographers, and political scientists have produced excellent studies of oil in the Niger Delta, focusing on issues of labour, economic change, politics, cultural expression, and much more (e.g. Watts, 2008; Adunbi, 2015; Agbonifo, 2018). Building on the rich scholarship on oil spills, gas flaring, and environmental protest movements, this conference centres on how people have learned to live with the environmental transformations induced by petroleum extraction in the Niger Delta. How did those living around oil wells and pipelines make sense of suffocating air pollution from gas flares and oil spills and the resultant prevalence of chronic respiratory and carcinogenic diseases? Why did some people protest through NGOs and litigations, and some through indigenous means, while others responded by shifting their gardens and livelihoods elsewhere to avoid toxicity?

This conference is organised within the framework of the European Research Council funded project AFREXTRACT, ‘Environmental Histories of Resource Extraction in Africa: Understanding Cultural and Political Responses to Environmental Transformation’ (see: [www.rug.nl/let/afretract](http://www.rug.nl/let/afretract)). We are interested to bring together interdisciplinary scholars, artists, and activists interested in questions of environmental change, lived experiences, cultural expressions, and political responses working on oil extraction in the Niger Delta.

Contributions might address some of the following questions:

- How can we document lived experiences of environmental transformation and forms of ‘slow violence’ in research on the Niger Delta (Nixon, 2013)?
- Which methodologies are suitable to studying lived experiences of environmental change (e.g. oral history, literary analysis, ecomusicology, political ecology)? What are the potentials and limitations of these methodologies?
- How do people make sense of environmental transformation through cultural expression (music, literature, poems, art)?
- In terms of political responses, how can we document ‘varieties of environmentalism’ (Guha and Martinez-Alier, 1997) that go beyond a binary between protest and resignation?





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- Which questions do decolonial approaches to the environmental humanities in the Niger Delta raise?

We explicitly welcome contributions that go beyond these questions and speak to the conference from a pluralistic perspective along the following sub-themes:

- Historical perspectives on oil and environmental transformations in the Niger Delta
- Methodological concepts and challenges in environmental history research
- Living with oil: Lifeworlds of oil and environmental transformation in the Niger Delta
- Adaptation practices in response to oil pollution in the Niger Delta
- Forms of environmental protest in the Niger Delta
- Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural responses to oil extraction in the Niger Delta
- Artistic interrogations of oil and the Niger Delta environment
- Philosophy, ethics, and oil resource management
- Culture, performance, and environmental justice
- Oil, gender, and environmental security
- The state and oil governance in Nigeria
- Oil extraction and climate change in the Niger Delta
- Oil futures: Oil theft, artisanal refining, and emerging trends in oil extraction



#### Niger Delta gas flares

Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger\\_Delta\\_Gas-Flares.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niger_Delta_Gas-Flares.jpg)

Please send in an abstract of max. 250 words, to: [afreextract@gmail.com](mailto:afreextract@gmail.com) by **Friday 26 January, 2024** if you are interested in presenting at the conference. We will inform you by mid-February 2024 whether your abstract has been selected.

This conference will be held on **11-12 July, 2024 at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria** (exact location t.b.c.). This conference receives organisational support from the University of Port Harcourt, Faculty of Humanities. Participants should cover their own travel costs to/from Port Harcourt.





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Organising team: Iva Peša (University of Groningen), Obari Gomba, (University of Port Harcourt), Mfon Ekpootu (University of Port Harcourt), Jackson Tamunosaki Jack (Federal University Otuoke & University of Groningen).

### Special notice for Early Career Scholars

On Wednesday 10 July, 2024, preceding the conference, we will hold a writing workshop aimed at Early Career Scholars (PhD students, postdocs, and lecturers). This workshop will be able to accommodate up to 8 scholars. If accepted, your draft article will be discussed by international senior scholars, with the intention of preparing your article for publication.

In September-October 2024, we will discuss your revised articles in an online format, so that there is continued engagement with your work.

This workshop receives endorsement from the Canadian Journal of African Studies (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcas20/current>). A senior editor from the journal, Dr Akin Iwilade (University of Edinburgh), will be present at the writing workshop. We will aim to publish a selection of the workshoped articles in the Canadian Journal of African Studies in 2025.

If you would like to be part of this writing workshop, please clearly indicate this when you submit your abstract for the conference.

Please note that only applicants who have done original empirical research will be considered for the writing workshop.

Full draft articles (please follow the journal's style guide) would need to be submitted by Friday 7 June, 2024 in order to be considered for the writing workshop.

