

*Musical Representations of Oil Exploration and Honeybees (Dis)placement and
Endangerment in the Niger Delta of Nigeria*

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During my fellowship at the Rachel Carson Center, I plan to work on an article discussing the relation between music and honeybees. It aims at unfolding the connections between the global environmental crisis and the African continental way of contesting and promoting environmental sustainability through music. Environmental degradation through oil exploration as a global phenomenon raises some fundamental questions about the safety of humans, animals and insects, such as honeybees. Environmental pollution and related health hazards for all life are prevalent in modern society. Recent studies of environmental degradation through oil have revealed that oil spillage is becoming one of the greatest environmental disasters that causes forced relocation and even the extinction of honeybees (Timsar, 2015). The representation of oil exploration and its environmental degradation in Niger Delta popular music has not been adequately analyzed. The proposed study is motivated by the desire to fill this gap and, in the process, provide an informed critical assessment of Niger Delta popular music about oil and its concomitant effects on honeybee degradation.

My work will focus on the effect of oil exploration on honeybees, and what music and musical communities are doing to advocate for them. Several of my research projects have been directed at climatic change and need for human adaptation. These and other topics will be my research focus during my stay at the Rachel Carson Center.

My second project is a book proposal which investigates the musical narratives of pollution in Lagos urban Nigeria. Scholarship on Nigerian musical spaces have tended towards preoccupation with wealth accumulation and romanticism generally. However, little scholarly attention has been directed at the engagement of popular music with urban pollution and environmental degradation. The central thesis of my book project is that the people of the Lagos urban spaces have ideas, assumptions and values about the environment – a form of indigenous ecological knowledge – that they express in music and that they bring to bear on socio-environmental problems. This study therefore examines the representation of popular music on Lagos city pollution and environmental degradation which include the land water and air spaces. The study concludes that music is a productive tool that connects people emotionally to their environment and helps advocate for urban sustainability.