

MUSICKING THE HISTORY OF OIL EXPLORATION AND ELECTRICITY ENERGY IN NIGERIA (1914-2022)

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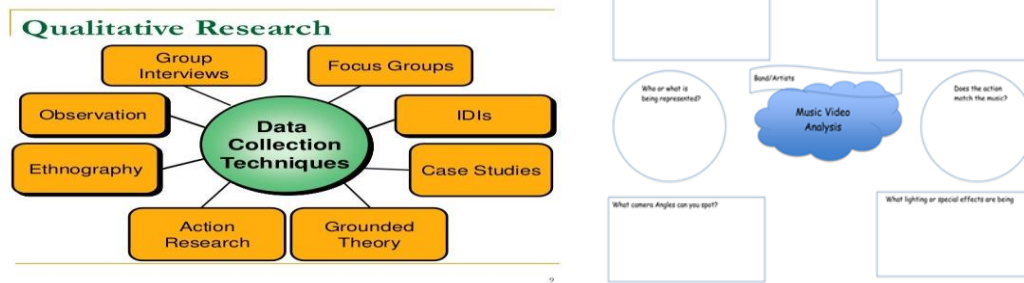
Introduction

Environmental degradation through oil exploration is a recurring global phenomenon which raises some fundamental questions about the general wellbeing and safety of animate and inanimate beings as well as the natural environment in modern society. Recent findings revealed that oil spillage, gas flaring, insecticides and pesticides are becoming the greatest things that affect our environment (Timsar, 2015, Bassey 2013) Against this backdrop, the representation of oil exploration and sustainable electricity energy in Nigerian popular music has not been adequately engaged. The study is motivated by the desire to fill this critical gap and, in the process, provide an informed critical assessment of the trajectories of oil exploration and electricity energy in Nigeria. There is a strong relationship between forms of cultural productions such as music and the ways in which they serve as arts of resistance to socio-economic and political issues.

The central thesis of this study is that the people of the Nigeria have ideas, assumptions and values about their environment, natural and resources – a form of indigenous ecological knowledge – that they express in music and that they bring to bear on socio-environmental problems related to resource extraction and energy. In this study I examined how popular music historize issues of oil exploration and unsustainable electricity in Nigeria. Music has the power to educate about current burning issues on national policies. In addition, the socio-political life of the people is embedded in their music, and this includes the roles played by individuals and groups. Music has abundant materials on the trajectories of oil exploration and the electricity energy in Nigeria

These seem to have been generally utilized by social activists in their unrelenting bid at creating awareness and promoting environmental sustainability. The choice of Nigerian popular music, for this study is premised on the discourse of oil exploitation and perennial electricity provision in Nigeria nation narratives that are noticeable in them. This study engages with Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence and environmentalism of the poor in which the texts of songs are used to explain global environmental degradation continuous intentional sabotaging through international collaborations that have kept electricity beyond the reach of the masses. This gives some insights into the problems and values of the Niger Delta region where the oil is exploited and the Nigeria nation that lack sufficient electricity for the daily lived life.

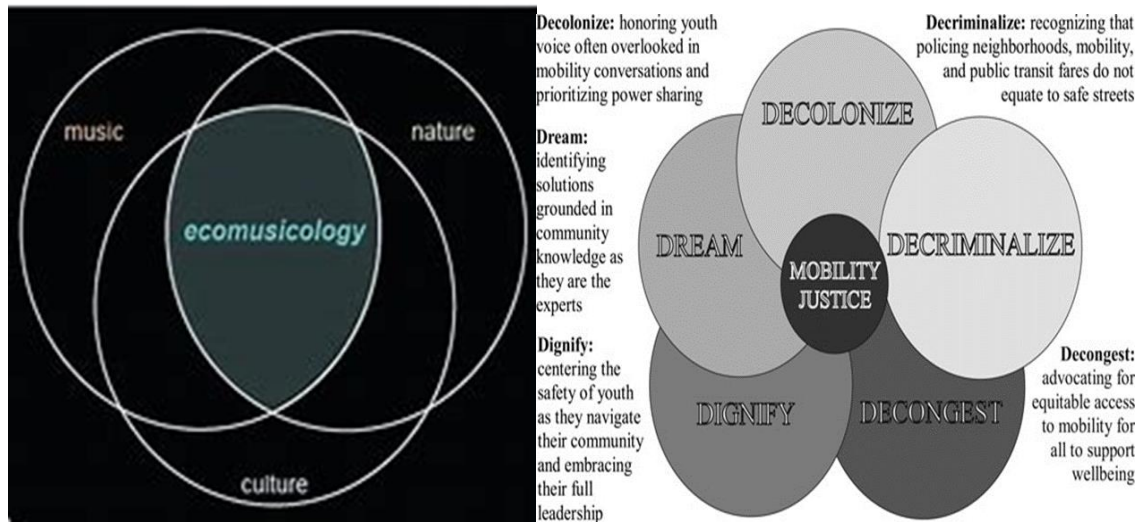
Methodology



This study employs ethnographic research design. It also includes musical and textual analysis. The study was conducted between 2016 and 2019. It entails interviews of some community members in Niger Delta where oil has displaced people and yet they do not have the light like several communities and cities in Nigeria. Songs of the following singers were analysed, Nneka Egbuna, Ubrei-Joe Jeru, Fela Anikulapo, African China among others. Furthermore, participant-observation were used in gathering data from selected members of some of the oil producing states namely Ondo, Rivers and Edo states and selected communities ravaging in darkness people were interviewed from Lagos, Ibadan and ile-Ife cities in Southwestern Nigeria. Nsukka, Enugu, The analysis is based on ecomusicology, which is the study of music, culture, sound and nature in a period of environmental crisis as proposed by Allen and Dawe (2016).

The Niger Delta is made up, by some estimates, of over sixty ethno-linguistic groups with the Ijaw representing the largest ethnic group. The Niger Delta is the delta of the Niger river sitting directly on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean in Nigeria. It is typically considered to be located within nine coastal southern Nigerian states, which include: all six states from the South-South geopolitical zone, one state (Ondo) from South West geopolitical zone and two states (Abia and Imo) from South East geopolitical zone. Africa's most extensive wetlands are in the Niger Delta, the centre of Nigeria's oil production with approximately 2.5 million barrels of oil produced every day (Bassey, 2013; Okuyade, 2011; Timsar, 2015). After more than fifty years of oil production in the Delta, the resulting land, air, and water pollution (gas flaring, spills, leaks from old infrastructure) are choking the Delta's vast ecosystem and habitats. The health costs, loss of livelihood is immeasurable. Organized armed resistance was mounted by Ijaw youths in the late 1990s after the realization that the more peaceful means employed by the Ogoni environmental and human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa had resulted in his 1995 execution along with eight colleagues by the Sani Abacha regime. Saro-Wiwa's much-publicized death (as much as his work) precipitated the birth of "a thousand Ken Saro-Wiwas" across and beyond the Niger Delta including poets and singers.

Ecomusicology and Mobility Justice as a Field of Theoretical Engagement



Allen and Dawe (2016)

Sheller

Ecomusicology informs the study because it emphasizes the triangularity of culture, environment and human beings (Allen et al., 2014; Allen & Dawe, 2016). The theory informs this study on how music helps in recreating a more sustainable environment. Ecomusicology is unique in that it draws on the value and significance of the lost habitats of animal lives like bees through oil exploitation activities. Ecomusicology as a theory that drives this paper explains the sounding scape of nature and the honey bee narratives of the selected music and poems. From the selected song texts and sound used in this paper, the musical elements such as melodic movements, harmonic structures.

Several studies on the relationship between the environments, nature and music are evident in scholarly work. Taylor (2011) argued that birds have been muses to composers through the ages and that birdsong can provide more than composers' inspiration. Silver (2015) writing about north-east Brazil, observed that Luiz Gonzaga's songs reference the songs of migrating birds. They describe the meaning of bird calls in relation to the arrival of rain or drought: purple-throated euphonia's call heralding rain and laughing falcon's call heralding drought. Guy's (2009) research into popular music in Taiwan recorded that it frequently referenced natural phenomena and named places, such as waterways. Of particular significance was the Tamsui River. He argued that the river had captured the imagination of songwriters for decades and that song, as representations of the once vital and now toxic river, had informed a Taiwanese environmental imagination. His analysis of the lyrics of songs about the Tamsui River produced a green reading of popular music in Taiwan.

Taylor and Hurley (2015) echoed the need for interaction between music and the environment, noting that it can potentially bring about social stability and musical responsibility.

Pedely (2013: 44) encouraged a wider discussion of popular music and environmental matters. He noted that ‘environmental matters have not been widely discussed in popular music studies and hopefully scholars will see this shortcoming as a new opportunity.’ Rees (2016) examined the ecological songs that emerged in the wake of modernisation in China. In her landmark research on popular music and the mediation of traditional ecological knowledge, she elucidated the sudden awareness of China to ecological songs. Her study referenced a wealth of current concerns over the environment, social change, and disappearing traditional arts, thereby tapping into a sense of nostalgia for a more locally rooted past. This echoed Rehding (2011), who argued that ecomusicology could take one of two approaches to the environment - apocalyptic or nostalgic. Since the literary arts focus mainly on an apocalyptic approach, he suggested that ecomusicology should rather appeal to the nostalgic motive of environmental love. He argued that ‘many in the narrative arts have taken the attention-grabbing apocalyptic route to raise awareness by instilling a sense of acute crisis in its audiences. It is quite possible that the most productive way forward for ecomusicology will be to follow the alternative route’ (Rehding, 2011 : 414)

History of electricity in Nigeria

Early industrial (advanced metallurgy) era—late 1800s., Industrial (steam engines) era—early to mid-1900s.

The first Nigerian electrical power plant was built at the cost of £6 thousand (~£702 thousand using current estimates) in Lagos Marina in 1896. As early as 1898, the streets of the Lagos Marina were lit between 6 P.M. and 11 P.M. by series connection. The power plant was built by the Public Works Department (PWD), this same site was taken much later by the Electricity Commission of Nigeria (ECN) as its national headquarter building. The plant comprised of two 30 kW, 1000 V, 80-cycle, single-phase supply. The power plant was primarily used for lighting purpose. The government house was first lit, followed by the colonial hospital. As of 1899, most streets on the Lagos Island were lit by glow lamps with maximum demand reaching 24 KW.

A third unit was installed in 1902 due to increasing demand for electricity for lighting, which was fast replacing the use of traditional lamps with oil from food sources. By 1909, installed capacity had reached 120 KW, with registered energy demand already reaching 65 KW [22]. Through installation of some underground 10,000-yard-long High Tension (HT) cables that fed 31 transformers (of which the largest was 5 thousand Volt Amps capacity), electricity reached Iddo and Ebute-metta axis of Lagos. In 1901, one of the colonial masters, Lord Lugard, undertook a similar project for the Niger Company and illuminated government house in Zungeru (a small city in North-Central Nigeria).

The development of electricity infrastructure was very slow since most of the activities at that time were agriculture, which did not support enough industries to justify the development and provision of an economic power supply. When industries were projected, there were no funds available. The only notable exceptions were the Lagos railway workshops at Iddo, and later at Ebute-metta, which were largely responsible for the replacement of the Lagos steam plants by diesel engines after 1910 in the new distribution of 2-phase, 40 cycles.

However, in 1914, the First World War put an end to further development of this power plant, as it was necessary to cannibalize some powerplants to provide spares to keep the others working. By 1918, the street lights had to be turned off due to increased energy demand and insufficient supply. This era heralded the pre-history of many infrastructural provisions in the next energy era which led to a sharp increase in demand for energy. The initial provision of the first electrical power plant, the surveys that led to the extensive provision of rail transport infrastructure, increased trade activities that led to the development of the ports, harbours, and terminals, as well as improved mechanization of agricultural practices increased the pressure for other forms of primary energy resources to meet the growing energy demand

Late industrial (dynamo, internal combustion engines) era—mid to late 1900s.

Industrial Era—Early to Mid 1900s This era saw the use of steam engines in manufacturing to produce mechanical work. The discovery of coal in 1909, led to the increasing use of coal for heating water to run steam engines. Consequently, this era saw the use of dynamos and electric generators in Nigeria. The use of coal for electricity generation was introduced, with the first coal fired power plant in Nigeria commissioned in 1923 in Lagos. As such, coal was not only used to run a steam engine, but also used in electricity generation. In this era, there were mechanical needs for manufacturing which evolved with more diverse types of manufactured goods; and mass transportation with the introduction of trains and rail transport systems in Nigeria. During this era, steam engines were the main technology driver of energy demand. The gradual embrace and extensive use of steam engines aided the following: The provision of the first few electrical power plants, which were used predominantly for lighting within the first two decades of this era. The use of steam engines in industrial applications and manufacturing—particularly in agro-food processing—to do mechanical work.

This era saw the initial steps towards the discovery and development of primary energy resources in Nigeria (particularly coal) and their impact on increased energy demand [30]. The following sections highlight the various aspects of steps taken in development of primary energy resources.

3.3.1. Coal Development, Mining Activities, and Energy Demand

Coal was discovered in Nigeria in 1909 in Enugu, eastern Nigeria. It is the oldest commercial fuel in Nigeria with early production dating back to 1916, when 24,500 tonnes of coal was produced. This era saw the increased use of coal for mass (railway) transportation, increased electricity generation, and other industrial application of coal. Figure 2 highlights the growth of coal as the primary energy resource during this era. Despite this growth, between 1944 and 1948, Nigeria started experiencing decline in the use of coal for electricity generation. This was due to the reduced mining activities impacted by the Second World War, as well as the mini-discoveries of crude oil which led to the commercial discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956

Information (microprocessor) era—early 2000s onward

Selected Singers on Oil and Electricity in Nigeria

Song 1 Just Like that by Fela Anikulapo 1980

The song is about epileptic power supply of electricity. The historicizes electricity during the colonial era an post-colonial till 1980

Our people come build Kainji Dam.
Dem come build the dam finish.
Electricity come stop.

Song 2 tilted *Never Expect Power Always (NEPA by Tony Allen*

In 1985, the late Tony Allen released *Never Expect Power Always (NEPA)*, and he just might've jinxed us for good with that title. The song was all about how useful electricity supply is to society and how its inconsistency affects people.

Song 3 by China Coroom titled Mr. President song released in 2000

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ Fuel e no dey
daily | There is no fuel despite the rich and surplus produced |
| ■ Brother transportation no dey, | Our transportation system is horrible |
| ■ And our road e no good o | Our roads are so bad and |
| ■ What about the NEPA people o, | NEPA National Electrical Power Authority |
| ■ We no get light everybody just dey halla | Are terribly malfunctioning |
| ■ Fuel no dey na how we wan survive, | How do we survive without fuel |
| ■ Na how dey wan survive, | The little that is available is too costly |

Song 4 by Eedris Abdulkareem, Eedris Abdulkareem, born Eedris Turayo Abdulkareem Ajenifuja, is a Nigerian hiphop artist. Born into a polygamous family in Kano, Nigeria, his father is from Ijesha, Osun State; and his mother from Ogun State. Raised in Kano, he adopted Kano State as his state of origin. His father resides in Lagos, while his mother continues to reside in Kano. In 2004, Abdulkareem's third album titled Jaga Jaga was launched. Its title track, which laments the corruption and suffering in Nigeria, was banned from radio airplay by Nigerian former President Olusegun Obasanjo in a televised address; although it continued to be played at nightclubs. The text of the song paints the picture of the life of common people in Nigeria. The message of the song is that the money realised from the oil industry should have been used to improve the living and social conditions for Nigerians especially electricity energy. The song texts says:

Song 4. Nigeria jagajaga

Nigeria jagajaga, everything scatter scatter,
poor man dey suffer suffer Gbosa, gbosa,
gunshot inna de air
NEPA won ti di regular 419 in Nigeria,
Agege to ikeja na 100 naira,
fuel scarcity na popular action film for Nigeria,
Everything scatter scatter, poor man dey suffer suffer
, gbosa gbosa, gun short inna de air

English Translation

Nigeria is in disarray,
the poor people are getting poorer,

And suddenly you hear gbosa gbosa gun shot in the air.
 (NEPA) National Electric Power Authority,
 now PHCN is a regular (419) movie in Nigeria,
 transportation from Agege to Ikeja in Lagos state is hundred naira
 fuel scarcities is a common popular action film in Nigeria.]

Nneka is another singer who sang about oil extractions and lack of development in Niger Delta and Nigeria in General

Song5 Dem come fish our water empty

<i>Dem come fish our water empty</i>	They came to empty the fishes in our river and sea
<i>Dem come chop our oil plenty</i>	they came to extract our oil
<i>Come take resources away</i>	They tool all the natural resources away
<i>Come take all our riches</i>	Took all the wealth away
<i>Dem come use us as dem store</i>	They use us to enrich themselves
<i>For raw material to make them rich</i>	they use us as raw materials for the productions
<i>Sister, sister, sis</i>	My sisters, sisters, sis.

<i>Wetin we dey do the the the</i>	What are we doing to stop this
<i>Wetin we dey do dem thief thief</i>	What are we doing to this rubbers
<i>Where we dey wen dem own own us</i>	What were we doing when they were syphoning us empty
<i>Tell me wetin I go do</i>	Tell me what I should do
<i>Kai, oga suffri oh, oga suffri oh,</i>	Looters enough is enough
<i>It don teh wen u dey do me like dis</i>	Its been long you have been syphoning our lives and oil
<i>but right now I no go take am</i>	But now I will not take such again
<i>I go open my mouth go tell u wetin</i>	Enough of my foolishness
<i>I dey feel</i>	and silence
<i>See, tell me, see wen we notice,</i>	Please what is wrong with us
<i>see wetin dem do us</i>	Why are we silence to challenge extractivism
<i>Where dem come take us,</i>	The Extractivists came and took our body in slavery first
<i>dem take us go iyunda</i>	They carry us away to over sea and plantation farms
<i>Use as dem slave</i>	Uses them as their slaves

Song 6 Blacktide by Jeru

Introduction: sounds of burning fire and boused pipe as crude pil spills inside the ,
 Ocean and river with canoe ocean.
 For the very long long time
 Our people are suffering
 For a long time
 our people are waiting
 so many things been happening
 (Loss of Habitats etc)
 So many years gone bye
 Our people suffering
 Our people crying
 From bugglers to explosion
 Food poinson in the nation
 What is the conclusion

Is there no solution
We need fish we don't need oilooeIII
We need soil we don't need oil ...ooosmm
Stop drilling oil wells o
That's when we will be friend o

We need fish we don't need oilooeIII
We need soil we don't need oil ...ooosmm
Stop drilling oil wells o
That's when we will be friend o

They came to steal from us
They took innocent lives ooo
Haven't they done enough
When do we realize o
They need to clean the land

We only seek for justice
We say no to blacktide ooo
Blacktide no more
They need to clean the land we only speak for justice

We need fish we don't need oilooeIII
We need soil we don't need oil ...ooosmm
Stop drilling oil wells o
That's when we will be friend o

Song 7 N.E.P.A. Bring The Light — Neo- 2007

N.E.P.A. Bring the Light is pop-rock song by a Nigerian [band called Neo](#). Listeners will croak at the part that goes, "I went to NEPA office, they told me they never took the light.

Song 8: Light Up — Sound Sultan feat. M.I Abaga; 2010

Sound Sultan sang, "When we ask our government o, when Dem go give us light, dem say na 2010," over a decade ago. It's 2024 and nothing has changed. We're still asking when we'll have stable electricity

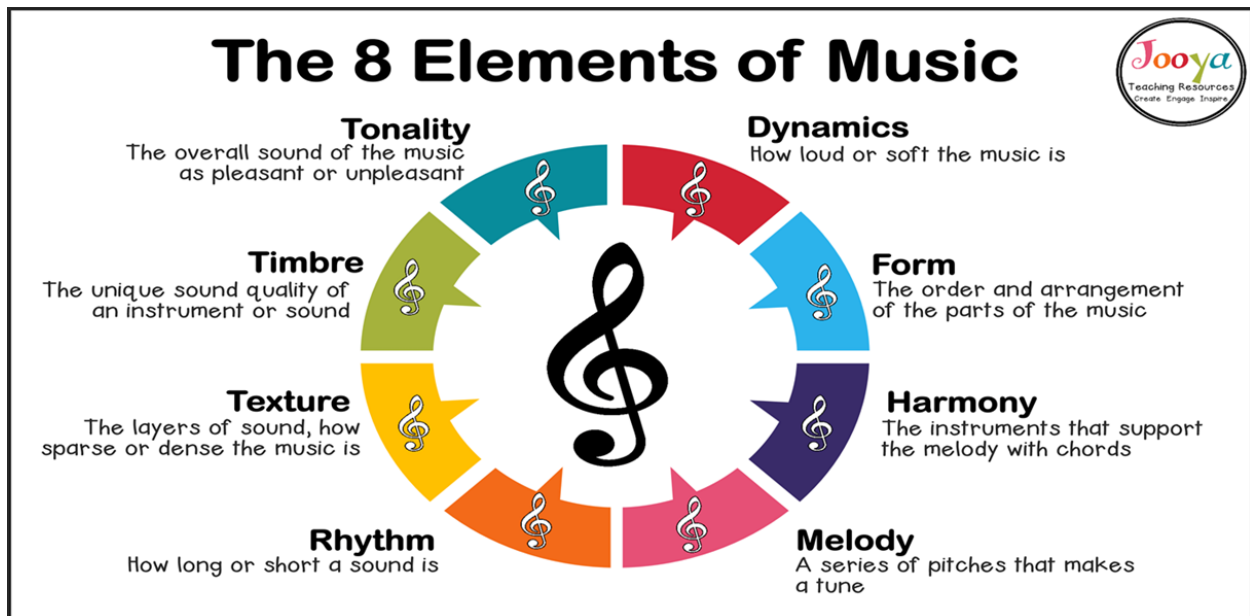
Song 9: Nepa — A-Q On "Nepa" 2020

A-Q reminds us that Nigerian electricity always disappears anytime rain comes around. He compares NEPA to rappers that splurge on shiny jewellery but have no longevity. Another proof Nigeria’s messy situation is still bad enough to remain a relevant pop culture reference.

Song 10: UP NEPA — XYZ- 2023

When hip-hop music producer and rapper, XYZ, lamented about the light issues on *UP NEPA* in he told us ceiling fans don’t roll when there’s no light. But the call-and-response chorus is where all the fun is at — “When I say Up, you say NEPA / Up! Nepa!” NEPA, please, answer our desperate cries.

Sound taxonomy: Symbolic and pictorial on oil exploration and Electricity in Nigeria



Themes in the songs and musical concerns about Niger Delta oil and unsustainable electricity

Emergency in national electricity issues

New policy on electricity

Corruption regarding electricity

Importation of oil while we have abundant of oil with four different refineries

Need for land Restitution

Displacement

Forced migration

Exclusivity

Migration

Mobility

Remediation

Need for sustainability

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the interdisciplinary research of music to energy humanities, electricity in Nigeria and oil and gas exploration I have also rightly explained the connections and trajectories of different layers of the historical narratives and melodic, harmonic soundscapes represented in the trajectories of oil exploration and terrible electricity supply in Nigeria.

Musical spaces and sounds spaces such as the melodic movements, tonal center, and other musical forms that reflect the corruptions, inefficient efforts, politicking and inequality in there semiotics and representation. Musical engagements could therefore resonate discourse on oil and gas, and electricity. Selected music historicise, entertains, create a nostalgia and help advocate for equality of space and place in the global discourse about movement and mobility infrastructure justice.

The song texts analysed shows that the politicians and elites collaborate to cause economic destruction, poverty, and environmental degradation Nigerian citizens. Ecomusicology as used in this paper examines ecological crisis brought through the oil exploitation and the trajectories of unstable electricity. Music is a weapon for political transformation and advocacy for social-economic-political issues in the country.

References

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