

CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

THE ARTS OF OIL:

Dis/enchantment and Popular Culture in Port Harcourt

David Pratten

University of Oxford

Friday, April 12, 2019**3 - 4:30 p.m.****Room H-1120**

Henri F. Hall Building

1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.

This talk engages with the emerging field of 'oil culture' or 'petro-culture' studies. It aims to make visible the conspicuously invisible role of oil in everyday life and culture, and to do so by examining the cultural history of Port Harcourt - a symbol and a catalyst of Nigeria's incorporation into the global economy of energy capitalism.

The talk asks how the popular arts reflect a dialectic of enchantment and disenchantment with the Nigerian petro-state. In what ways do the popular arts celebrate its profits and politics, and critique its inequalities and injustices? Is the popular culture of oil a protest culture? Can we demonstrate the role of political ecology on cultural creativity in local arts and in the diaspora?

Enchantment and disenchantment, my framings, appear to offer multivalent concepts from art, religion and politics with which to investigate the anthropology of Nigerian arts. The conceptual dialectic play across a number of registers - enchantment in relation to the oil economy operates in terms of the magical state, to the fetishistic qualities of oil and to the 'technologies' of artistic production. Disenchantment too is multivalent. In addition to its association with rationalisation it can stand for critique, protest, and violence. It can mark a temporal moment - after-enchantment, post-boom, post-oil.

ADMISSION IS FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME.

Please contact juliesoleil.archambault@concordia.ca for further details.

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David Pratten is Associate Professor in the Social Anthropology of Africa at the University of Oxford. His research is located in southeastern Nigeria and focused initially on themes of history, violence, and the state which resulted in the monograph: *The Man-Leopard Murders: History and Society in Colonial Nigeria* (2007). His more recent research has examined issues of youth, insecurity and performance focusing on vigilantism and masquerade. A new research project explores the cultural history of Port Harcourt in an examination of the relationship between the popular arts and the oil industry.