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## Fossil Falsehoods

Environmental Action and Sponsored Disinformation in Oil  
Resource Communities

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Fossil Falsehoods: Environmental Action  
and Sponsored Disinformation in Oil  
Resource Communities: A case study of  
the Niger Delta

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research investigates the influence of fossil fuel industry disinformation on the struggle for environmental justice within marginalised communities affected by oil pollution, specifically focusing on Nigeria's Niger Delta.*

*Scholars such as Taylor (2023) examine the historical weaponization of disinformation by fossil fuel actors to delegitimise environmental concerns and protests. Meanwhile, much liberal media scholarship often highlights disinformation as a discursive phenomenon and a battle of narratives, especially in digital spaces (Treen et al., 2020: 10-12), recommending media literacy as a primary response mechanism. This approach overlooks the material, tangible impact of disinformation on communities and livelihoods.*

*Employing semi-structured interviews with environmental justice advocates, journalists, and fact-checkers deeply connected to the Niger Delta, this thesis demonstrates the urgent need to root climate disinformation discourse in the lived realities of frontline communities to inform more effective and equitable global response.*

*The study findings dissect expert knowledge on the geopolitical, affective, moral and material impacts of disinformation from the fossil fuel industry revealing a complex and cyclic interplay of corporate strategy, state complicity, and community resilience as well as ongoing and ever deepening harm and damage to communities and the environment.*

## INTRODUCTION

On the morning of November 10, 1995, nine men with their wrists and ankles shackled were led one after the other, from military detention in Port-Harcourt prison, Nigeria to the gallows then killed by hanging. The first person to be executed was Ken- Saro Wiwa, leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni people, MOSOP who had spearheaded activism against the environmental degradation in Ogoniland, one of the communities that make up Nigeria's oil rich Niger Delta (Westra, 1998; Campbell, 2002). These deaths came to be known as the murder of the Ogoni nine and were widely condemned by human rights organisations and foreign governments as a miscarriage of justice (Saale & David, 2014: 115-116; Nixon, 1996: 115; Amnesty Human Rights Watch, 1996). The international outrage and pressure triggered by the executions ended the extractive activities of Royal Dutch Shell in Ogoni land but not in other parts of Niger Delta. Twenty-nine years later, a report published by Both Ends (2024) raised alarm over the high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the blood of women from Otuabagi in Olobiri community, the site where the first oil well was discovered in Nigeria. The high levels of PAHs, linked to pollution from oil extraction in the community, increases the risks of terminal illness and reproductive challenges for residents of this community.

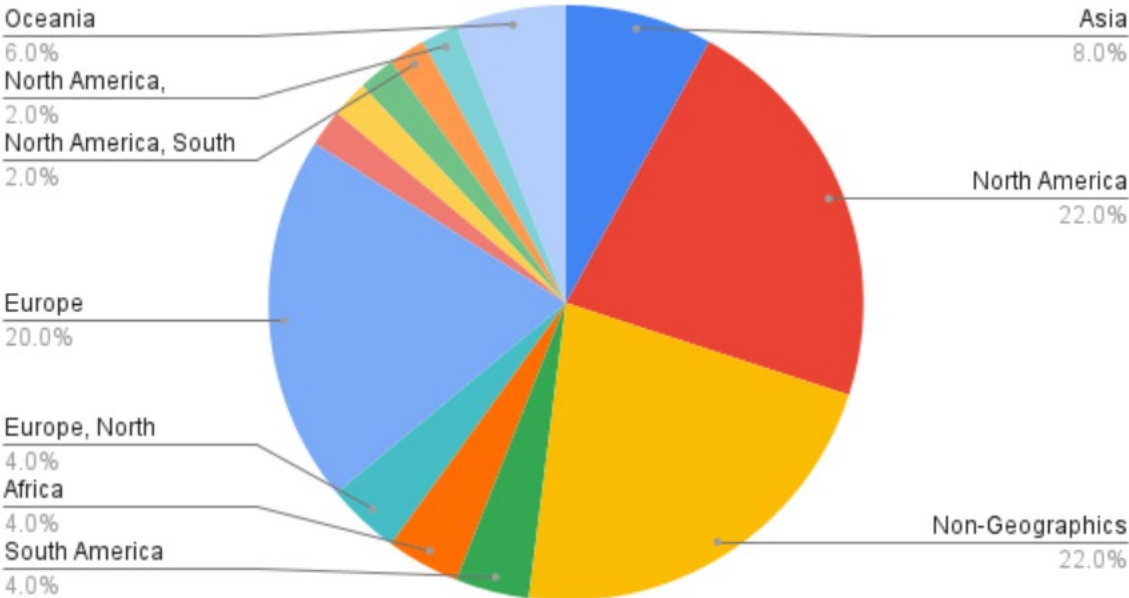
These two cases, in different Niger Delta communities share a striking pattern of linkages to false narratives, sponsored by one of Nigeria's biggest fossil fuel companies, Royal Dutch Shell (Shell, 2010). In the aftermath of the Ogoni nine execution, Shell bought prime space in international newspapers including The Globe and Mail to deny responsibility for the murder, but also the environmental degradation suffered in the Niger Delta (Mathiason, 2009; Westra, 1998: 158). But years later, two witnesses from the Ogoni nine trial recanted their testimonies and admitted to having been bribed with money and offers of jobs from Shell to give false testimony (Entine, 2009). Additionally, the prosecution lawyers in the court case initiated by families of the Ogoni nine alleged that Shell had worked directly with the Nigerian government to facilitate the death of the activists and the oil giant eventually opted to settle

before the case went to court (Alaska Wilderness, 2012: 17-19). In a similar fashion, Shell has for several years insisted its gas flaring and other extraction activities in oil resource producing communities do not have any health or environmental implications (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, n.d.) but the Both Ends report on the women of Olobiri community amongst other research outputs (HOMEF, 2024; Brown & Last, 2023; Alimi & Gibson, 2022; Both Ends, 2024; Nwaogu & Akpoghome, 2022: 84) have shown their claim to be misleading.

Till today, Nigeria's Shell continues to claim innocence, insisting it is a victim of extortionary moves from Niger Deltan activists, worsened by the rise of militant groups like Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) which emerged in 2005/2006 to demand "greater control and benefits from oil production for local communities" (Courson, 2011). Nonetheless, there have been documented cases of the oil giant pushing a false narrative and criminalising individuals protecting their environment in other regions where it is active (Gilmartin, 2009; Global Witness; 2023). The oil giant also spent an estimated \$22 million in 2015 on lobbying activities against climate policies (Friends of the Earth International, 2018). It was therefore not surprising when The Climate Deception Dossiers were published in 2015, documenting a long history of active disinformation and deliberate climate sabotage from the fossil fuel industry. The practice of utilising "information disorders" to drive profit is not peculiar to Royal Dutch Shell. A focused research programme on 'Data and Misinformation in an Era of Sustainability and Climate Change Crisis', found that at least 50 different accounts on X (formerly Twitter) focused on advancing misleading climate information were funded and backed by Oil titan, Exxon. Also, The Climate Deception Dossiers which analysed 85 internal memos spanning three decades revealed that a range of disinformation tactics from the fossil fuel industry, who had misled the public by 'forging letters to Congress, secret funding of a supposedly independent scientist, the creation of fake grassroots organizations' (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2015).

This is indicative of a historical widespread practice of fossil fuel disinformation (Taylor, 2023) but while the conversation about Big Oil’s role in sabotaging the environment and weaponising disinformation to stall climate action may have gained global attention, research interests appear to be more focused on its impact on the world’s sustainability agenda (Carrington, 2025; Maertens *et al.*, 2020). Hence, a majority of related studies focus their research area on western regions, digital spaces and publications, with barely any focus on the communities that are at the centre of fossil fuel extraction and most vulnerable to climate change. Using two key words “fossil fuel disinformation” and “climate disinformation”, I collected 50 research papers published over the past five years from a range of sources. An analysis of the geographic and topical focus areas of these papers revealed that only 4% (Appendix A) ventured into the discourse of climate and environmental disinformation impact in global south regions, specifically from the African continent; one of many historically disadvantaged areas likely to bear the most burden from climate shocks and environmental injustice (Ekhator & Okumagba, 2024).

**Count of Region**



**Figure 1: Pie-Chart illustrating geographical spread of published research paper (See Appendix A for details)**

As a former journalist and fact-checker, I had extensively reported on the impact of climate change in affected communities across Nigeria (Sanni, n.d.), which may have informed the ease with which I spotted the gap in studies on the impact of climate disinformation. This discovery informs my research interest in spotlighting how communities affected by oil pollution experience fossil fuel disinformation. Media scholarship often highlights disinformation as a discursive phenomenon and a battle of narratives, especially in digital spaces (Treen *et al.*, 2020: 10-12), recommending media literacy (Mahmood, 2023) as a primary response mechanism but as Bhat & Banaji (2019) evidentially document, it is a representational practice, involving real people with potentially violent consequences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In 'Merchants of Doubts', Oreskes & Conway (2010) unravel the high-level co-ordination that goes into casting doubt and sowing confusion on climate science by profiteers of climate confusion, pointing to how deep industry funding sustains political lobbying and media manipulation. This organised orchestration of disinformation campaigns has been researched as reproducing polarisation across ideological and political lines (McCright & Dunlap, 2011); enabling distractions through 'discourses of delay' with significant environmental, health and democratic implications (Oreskes & Supran, 2017). Meanwhile, Ophir *et al.* (2024), contest this view, arguing that the 'complex media diets of individuals' influence their climate stance. In an interview, Supran sums up the instrumentality in place as a sophisticated propaganda machine that has effectively utilised language for the dirty work of politics (Powell, 2021). This

propaganda transcends narratives to the criminalisation of environmental justice movements, its advocates and supporters<sup>12</sup>

As scholarship however indicates, studies advancing empirical evidence about the impact of climate disinformation have the Global North as their primary site (Palau-Sampio, *et al.*, 2024; Denisova, 2025). Cunliffe-Jones (2025) highlights that there is a need to move beyond the routine study of fact vs fake to a more structured evaluation of the real-world harms and risks posed by information disorders. Yet, studies on how climate disinformation spreads and impacts oil producing communities- especially in the global south, are largely lacking despite its location as a site for controversial fossil fuel interests and activities. A study by Essien (2025) found that ‘nearly 87% (33 out of 38) *of related* (emphasis mine) studies are centred on contexts within the Global North—particularly North America, Western Europe, and parts of Oceania—while only 13% (5 out of 38) identify with or directly examine the Global South.’

This paper therefore sets out its research question as follows: **How does disinformation from the fossil fuel industry affect the struggle for environmental justice in marginalised communities affected by oil pollution?**

The research objective seeks to interrogate the assumed strategic use of disinformation by capitalist interests in a region characterised by intensive oil resource extraction and its implications. This thesis is split into two parts, starting with a theoretical analysis that establishes the need to triangulate how disinformation, capitalism and environmental justice/injustice interact; then a thematic analysis to map out the emerging patterns from interviewing environmental justice advocates and journalists with expertise in Nigeria’s Niger Delta alongside a critical assessment of findings on the deployment of disinformation as an

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<sup>1</sup> Melrose, K. (n.d.). Fighting for environmental justice [Interview with Lazarus Tamana]. *Amnesty International UK*. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/fighting-environmental-justice>

<sup>2</sup> Lawyers for Lawyers. (2025, June). *Access to environmental justice under threat: The role, risks, and rights of environmental lawyers*. <https://www.lawyersforlawyers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Access-to-Environmental-Justice-under-Threat-Lawyer-for-Lawyers-single-pages.pdf>

instrument of hegemonic control by fossil-fuel capitalist actors within extractive resource communities.

In line with the above, this literature review section forms the first part of this thesis, prioritising a theoretical framework that presents disinformation as central to capitalists' hegemonic aspirations. It incorporates elements of Marxist theory, focusing on class struggles and dialectical materialism to create linkages between fossil fuel disinformation and environmental injustice while maintaining a decolonial lens, relative to its material significance and contribution to sustaining social inequalities.

### **Framing Disinformation**

The Shorenstein Centre at Harvard University emphasise disinformation as strategic dissemination of false information intended to achieve specific societal or ideological objectives (Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, n.d.), echoing the broader definition of disinformation as information that is deliberately designed to mislead (Fallis, 2015: 402; Spies, 2019; Hameelers, 2022). Broad acceptance of this definition could be said to have emanated from Wardle and Derakhshan's 2017 report, 'Information Disorder', and this understanding is now widely applied in academic and policy research (Spies, 2019). Its core assumptions -as being merely a form of information and essentially intentional/functional- have however been contested by Simion (2024) who draws on an exemplified full account of the nature of disinformation to argue that this definition and typology is limiting and it is better understood as content that potentially constructs and maintains states of manufactured ignorance through its dissemination but subject to given parameters. (Pg. 1210-1213, 1217). Simion's framing situates the phenomenon within broader literature on the impact of and response to disinformation practices, providing a starting point to critically examine the dialectical relationship between disinformation from the fossil fuel industry as a hegemonic tool (Kiely, 2025; Gentile & Gupta, 2025) and development in oil resource communities.

It has been established that 'whereas Karl Marx did not explicitly theorise the media, his views on class struggle, monopoly capital, historical materialism, alienation, and false consciousness

have proved useful in analysing the economic and ideological aspects of media industries' (Fuchs, 2014). It thus makes sense to encase disinformation in the frame of a convergence between profit, politics and development and how 'structural power is reproduced and reinforced across institutions' towards understanding its foundational role in structural inequality (Kuo & Marwick, 2021: 4-6). As Gramsci recognises, power is constructed and maintained through strategic instrumentalities used by dominant groups to manufacture consent, sustain ideological dominance, and marginalise oppositional voices (Hall, 1988; Gramsci, 1971). Hyzen (2021) builds on this to expand on how disinformation is not merely false information but is linked to propaganda; shaped by capitalist and political interests, reinforcing hegemonic power structures (Pg. 3481-3484). From this perspective, we can argue that disinformation reproduces existing racial, economic, and political inequalities (Kuo and Marwick, 2021; Hannan, 2023; Garland, 2024). The relative powerful interests achieve this reproduction by 'sowing confusion and conspiracy theories to manipulate those vulnerable to such cynical duplicity without the education or critical thinking skills to realise this' (Garland, 2024: 19). Drawing on Habermas and Foucault, Stahl volunteers his view on critical research around misinformation, disinformation and truth, arguing for a contested interpretation, active audience participation (2006: 89-90) and supporting the idea that there is a functioning of disinformation as 'collaborative work within online and offline crowds' (Starbird, Arif, & Wilson, 2019) but as Chiumbu and Rade note, decoloniality must be applied to 'issues as manifested in the political economy and media operations in Africa' (2020: 3). We can thus understand why merely categorising disinformation as a toxin, is to assume that society is characterised by a previously healthy and equal information ecosystem (Kuo & Marwick: 1). In making this argument, the duo signposts the need to root any study of disinformation in a contextual understanding of social constructs and its material underpinnings (Fossum, 2022: 35; Alemanne, 2019; Christensen, 2022). The underlying signifier in this approach is the strategic manipulation of narratives by oil conglomerates to maintain economic and social

power (Lyall, 2018). Their influence cuts across academia<sup>34</sup>, politics<sup>56</sup> and civil societies<sup>7</sup> and as the attempts by former big oil executive, John Browne to be elected chancellor of the University of Cambridge<sup>8</sup> reveal; it also extends to the highest echelons of society. Foregrounded in this awareness, this study analyses fossil fuel disinformation in Niger Delta communities through the perspectives of environmental justice advocates. By examining how marginalised communities experience and resist fossil fuel disinformation, the research contributes to scholarly understanding of capitalist hegemony while advancing debates on environmental injustice in subaltern contexts.

## **Disinformation as a tool for Capitalist Hegemony**

The capitalist class aims for the stabilisation of its global capitalist system by exercising dominant influence and control that extend beyond mere economic power to include ideological, cultural, and political spheres (Daldal, 2014: 151; Rupert, 1995). Joining this conversation, Gill (1993) notes that the 'Gramscian approach forces us to examine not only the productive and military capabilities of the state(s) as the motor of hegemonic transition but also to investigate how class alliances are built and ideology is employed in order to both construct and legitimate a hegemonic order' (Pg.186). This is evidenced by Louis Althusser's 'materialisation of ideology' through which he systematises Gramsci's ideas, arguing that ideology is material because it directly links to the production process, acting as a 'moral, mental incitement of men to produce in a certain fashion' (Daldal, 2014: 158). Althusser's position informs our understanding of how perpetuating a mode of production involves

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3 Milman, o., (2023, March 27). Exxon in the classroom: how big oil money influences US universities. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/mar/27/fossil-fuel-firms-us-universities-colonize-academia>

4 <https://theconversation.com/how-the-oil-and-gas-industry-influences-higher-education-235168>

5 Farand, C. (2017, January 24). Revealed: UK ministers lobbied Nigeria's government to protect oil giant Shell. DeSmog. <https://www.desmog.com/2017/01/24/revealed-uk-ministers-lobbied-nigeria-government-protect-oil-giant-shell/>

6 Aling, L. (2013, June 17). *Shell and the political elite of Nigeria: A study of corruption and authoritarianism* [Bachelor's thesis, Leiden University]. Leiden University Student Theses. <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2660931/view>

7 Healy, H. (2024, February 12). How fossil fuel money stalled Britain's commitment to net zero. Heinrich Böll Stiftung Brussels Office - European Union. <https://eu.boell.org/en/2024/02/12/fossil-fuels-uk-net-zero>

8 (2025, June 13). Lord Browne: 'We are now approaching a very dangerous moment'. The Times. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/lord-browne-we-are-now-approaching-a-very-dangerous-moment-tqv0c780g>

reproducing the conditions of production; including the 'reproduction at the domain of ideas' or 'ideological reproduction'. As Foucault however maintains, this discursive power puts into circulation apparatuses of knowledge that are not merely ideological constructs (Foucault, 1979: 26-28) and can be characterised by a use value that is dominated by the exchange value of products, which become commodities to accumulate money capital in the hands of capitalists (Fuchs & Mosco, 2012: 133). In contemporary scholarship, we come to understand that this symbiotic relationship has evolved into a fusion of media capitalism providing mass deception to hide the pathologies of capitalism, which include mass poverty, rising inequalities, and the acceleration of global warming (Artz, 2024). A key unintended consequence of this hegemonic evolution is an increased awareness of the normalisation of deception as there is a constant exposure to dishonest messaging within an economic system that is deliberately manipulated and distorted from its natural state (Beder, 2024; Ruiz, 2024; Horowitz, 2022; Gardner, 1975). This is further compounded by 'industry-backed disinformation campaigns on crucial matters of public interest.....interfering with language itself, hindering our fundamental ability to name our world and cooperate with one another in order to bring about a better one' (Horowitz, 2022).

Although focused on white supremacy, Kuo & Marwick central literature on 'Critical disinformation studies: History, power, and politics' highlight that this strategy serves to perpetuate existing power structures, by exploiting and marginalising the subaltern. Spivak's (1998) foundational work on epistemic violence, recognises that dominant knowledge systems are designed to silence subaltern voices. This contributes to our understanding of corporate disinformation, functioning as a mechanism of epistemic domination that misrepresents local resistance, pushing them to the margins while normalising corporate exploitation. Contributing from a *Business and Management* perspective, Chowdhury (2023) emphasises the academic institutionalisation of this misrepresentation as colonially informed to serve powerful interests. It represents an epistemic dimension revealing that disinformation extends beyond cognitive manipulation to constitute a form of colonial violence undermining the capacity of affected communities to advocate for environmental justice within the dominant

discourse. The aim of capitalist propaganda thus emerges as 'providing legitimacy to the inequalities it created and ensuring the compliance of workers in the capitalist system.' (Beder, 2005: 7). While this might be indicative of the pervasive nature of the power exercised, Foucault argues that this hegemonic state of interaction still leaves room for local knowledge and generates resistance– counter-hegemony (Daldal, 2014: 160). Gramsci may have moved beyond a determinist focus on the material to argue for a consideration of the 'interplay between the economic and political' (Ateed & Özcan, 2023: 753) but capitalist hegemony is still considered a reductionist approach underestimating the autonomy of politics, culture, and ideology even as it still prioritises class over other forms of identity and oppression like race, gender, and sexuality, failing to account for intersectional experiences of domination (Gottneider, 1985: 982). Yet, we must acknowledge that this intersectionality does not interfere with the diffusion of capitalists' power as a force of influence and direction in society (Shohadaei, 2025; Bohrer, 2019). In essence, there is a sophisticated manipulation of ideological and cultural mechanisms through the weaponisation of ignorance in advancing material interest.

### **Fossil-Fuel Disinformation and Environmental Injustice**

With ideas and societal structures shaping the material and economic conditions of society, particularly the means and relations of production (Giddens, 2014; Porpora, 1993: 212-213), fossil fuel disinformation is not an accidental byproduct but a deliberate, organised effort by powerful economic actors to protect and expand their material wealth and influence. While profit drives the oil industry to misinform the masses, the evidence highlighting its linkages to global warming and the resulting environmental and social dimensions of its impact continues to grow (Al-Rawi, *et al.*, 2021; Palau-Sampio, *et al.*, 2024; Gertrudix, *et al.*, 2024). As Moser (2021) notes, 'the consequences of this semiotic pollution and corruption have been catastrophic'; perpetuating health and environmental harm that reveal systematic patterns of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities associated with the location of and human exposures to fossil fuel and climate change-related hazards (Parsons, *et al.*, 2024). The idea of this targeted impoverishment is further explored by Wolf, *et al.* (2025), using the concept of

fossil-fuel/environmental racism to highlight that the material consequences of fossil fuel industry's operations and its disinformation campaigns are disproportionately borne by marginalised communities.

In June 2025, Elisa Morgera, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights and climate change presented a report<sup>9</sup> to the general assembly in Geneva, calling for the criminalisation of fossil fuel disinformation. Morega, who was making a case for the defossilisation of the economy, said the 'fossil fuel playbook has undermined the protection of all human rights that are negatively impacted by climate change for over six decades' (Lahkani, 2025). This call, rooted in research about the established and organised dissemination of disinformation from the fossil fuel industry, with data indicating that the bulk of funding for climate sceptic research came from the oil multinationals (Lewandowsky, 2021) also identified these disinformation campaigns as part of a larger fossil fuel propaganda agenda. Its objective was however restricted to muddling up climate action by saturating multiple communication channels, ranging from scientific reports and policy briefings to social media posts and news coverage with industry-friendly messaging that creates widespread confusion (Gertrudix, *et al.*, 2024; Kaur, *et al.*, 2024). Their multi-platform approach involves the complicity of universities and think-tanks, ensuring the reinforcement of fossil fuel ideologies as it creates self-reinforcing echo chambers that normalise industry perspectives (Hassan *et al.*, 2024: 510). Again, Guethner (2024) suggests that the underlying objective is to make it difficult for the public to distinguish between objective climate information and corporate propaganda designed to protect financial interests (Pg. 7). What appears to be missing from the debate is how the unbalanced geography of environmental hazards, which shifts with the contours of race and class (Newell, 2020: 87) has placed global south communities, like those in Nigeria's Niger Delta at the centre of these disinformation campaigns and exposure to higher levels of the impact of oil pollution, entrenched within the

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<sup>9</sup> Morgera, E. (2025, June 16–July 11). The imperative of defossilising our economies: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change (Agenda item 3). UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-ninth session

long injustices of colonialism, racism, and economic disempowerment that require land and bodies as sacrifice zones (Gonzalez & Mutua, 2022; Juskus, 2023: 10-13). It is against this background I then argue that, in situating disinformation powered environmental injustice within a Marxist ideological and discursive framework, the debate about its need for fundamental revision, creative adaptation, or replacement with alternative frameworks for understanding social change and power relations (Gottlieb, 1986) must centre the experience of frontline communities but also their construction of counter-narratives to fossil-fuel industry disinformation.

### **Power Relations in Oil Resource Communities**

In understanding how disinformation impacts environmental justice through power relations, we engage with how structural inequalities, rooted in material relations and class (structural power), allocate differential capacities and influence development outcomes in society. Power has been explored as a fundamental concept for understanding development (Gaventa, 2003; Foucault, 1979) because it explains how certain approaches, practices, and outcomes become possible while others are marginalised or excluded. As articulated by Barnett & Duvall (2005), 'particular discourse of development orientates action in one direction and away from others,' (Pg. 55) illustrating that power is not merely about one actor controlling another but operates through diffuse social relations and systems of knowledge (productive power) that constitute subjects and shape what is considered appropriate or even imaginable (Foucault, 1982: 782). This provides a reference point for understanding how disinformation constitutes as power by functioning to dominate narratives, setting the terms of reference and suppressing alternatives.

Existing literature suggests that for oil resource communities, this power play is characterised by the deployment of conflict achieved through the factionalisation of resistance and weaponisation of Corporate Social Responsibilities, CSR initiatives to steer community development discourse and the continuation of oil extraction despite negative externalities (Egbon, *et al.*, 2018; Cox, 2015). These mechanisms are anchored in the spread of selective

narratives around resource allocation and compensation to sustain conflict; the strategic disinformation on inaction and harmful impacts; and calculated control of information flow within or outside oil resource communities. For example, the Niger-Delta's Global Memorandum of Understanding maintains a global image of fossil-fuel industry's responsiveness without relinquishing control or meaningful accountability (Egbon, *et al.*, 2018: 63). Additionally, the fossil-fuel industry has been found culpable for providing divisive information in oil-resource communities (Özkaynak, *et al.*, 2020; Egbon, *et al.*, 2018). Their tactics are further backed by a complicit, profit-driven state who maintains that supporting the petroleum industry is in society's best interest while justifying coercion against those who challenge this claim to maintain legitimacy (Obi, 2012: 224, 233; Cox, 2015: 236-237). The resulting human rights violation and continued environmental degradation for profit ground these realities in the Marxist analysis of power as operating through direct, structural relations stemming from material conditions that allocate resources, advantages, and shape interests (structural power) (Cardinale, 2015). While this analytical perspective may reduce power dynamics in oil resource communities to class relations, it offers an entry for further unpacking how productive power shapes 'the practices and policies that are possible, imaginable, permissible, and desirable' (Foucault, 1979). What emerges is a combination of false narratives manipulating counter-hegemonic forces and the appearance of development through CSR; to further the capitalist exploitation of communities. Hardy & Thomas (2015) describe it as a merger of the discursive and the material (Pg. 21-22). Thus, we see how the distortion of knowledge in conjunction with the state apparatus sustains control for the profiteering of the fossil-fuel industry.

Meanwhile, Cox (2015) argues that defeating this hegemony involves disaggregating the underlying alliance and constructing an alternative strategy supported by various social actors (Pg. 235). Understanding power dynamics, including both the structural forces of inequality and the discursive processes that shape reality and identity, is therefore essential. This approach functions to strengthen the counter-hegemonic discourse through a critical evaluation of the production and deployment of disinformation to strategically influence

environmental justice outcomes in oil producing communities, specifically the reproduction of control.

Conclusively, there has clearly been extensive pedagogical inquiry into fossil fuel disinformation, environmental justice and power relations in oil resource communities. However, there is no current literature that explores the triangular intersecting relationship of these concepts and its materiality in communities where extractive interests are present. This research is therefore an exercise in recognising the instrumentality, identification and implications of disinformation narratives for oil resource communities in the global south, using the Niger Delta as a case study. Acknowledging the need to decolonise scholarly understanding of disinformation from the fossil fuel industry as it relates to “the question of global capitalism, epistemic dominance, racism, and other related issues,” it focuses on mapping original accounts of disinformation narratives circulating in oil resource contexts. In examining the construction, spread and ramifications of these narratives this research centres frontline counter-hegemonic forces, minimising the mediation of subaltern voices in its investigation of the extent to which fossil fuel disinformation can be said to contribute to the deepening of existing social cleavages, marginalisation, and unequal power relations. This approach further situates the research within broader debates on the westernised paradigm of development and the politics of representation that exacerbate environmental injustice for communities affected by oil pollution.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This research attempts a methodical understanding of sector and community specific disinformation, relying on emerging patterns for an interpretation of its relevance. This requires relatively authentic accounts of environmental and climate disinformation, emanating directly from the region in focus. Hence, the data for this study is derived from a direct interaction with individuals who are at the forefront of knowledge construction and resistance to ‘fossil-fuel imperialism’ (Jurema & König, 2025) in Nigeria's Niger Delta. Through interviews, I actively engaged with the subjects’ lived experience, recognising that they

provide nuanced insights and a subjective interpretation of the world around them (Dunwoodie, *et al.* 2022; Kvale, 1996).

Interviews are generally considered to be the most common form of qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014: 87) allowing for a detailed interaction on the subject of mutual interest, and the generation of elaborate data that can be explored more thoroughly. Its semi-structured format allows 'the researcher to add or omit any aspect of the pre-planned questions', leaving room for flexibility during interviews (Alamri, 2018: 65). Although criticised for a general lack of consensus on how to collect, analyse, and report on qualitative interview data (Dunwoodie, *et al.*, 2022; Symon, & Cassell, 2011), this research method has also been highlighted as being of greater use to practitioners than quantitative research as they provide a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand and more comprehensive and actionable insights (Halbesleben, 2011). Its scientific nature is stressed by Kuhn (1962), who notes that 'any scientific inquiry is based on a particular paradigm, which can be defined as a world view or a set of linked assumptions about the world'.

The physical distance between the community and myself for the duration of this research period established the digital space as the channel through which the study would be conducted. While the study could have adopted a representative online survey of the Niger Delta, the weak digital literacy of residents (ND Link, 2024) in a majority of the semi-rural communities that make up this region would have severely limited the approach. For the same reasons, an online focus group discussion with different categories of people within the same community was not appropriate for this study. Consequently, semi-structured interviews conducted with digitally engaged individuals connected to the Niger Delta represented the most credible source for collecting the data used in this study.

### **Meaning Making from Emerging Patterns: A Thematic Analysis**

In interpreting the derived data, this study adopts a Thematic Analysis approach, relying on Nvivo 15 to meticulously match texts from the interview transcripts towards building a contextualised interpretation of what accounts for disinformation in an oil resource producing

community, its sources and the consequential discourse that materialises. Thematic Analysis is recognised for its ability to reveal both explicit and implicit meanings in the data, going beyond surface-level summaries to capture the depth and nuances of participants' perspectives (Joffe, 2011). Drawn from the field of psychology, its validity as reliable and applicable builds on saturation observed across the entire body of data, related to the qualitative tradition of reaching research conclusions on the basis of sufficient justifiable observations (Lowe, *et al.*, 2018: 193). The thematic saturation for this study is shown in the construction of a table to establish the themes that emerge, aided by a codebook (APPENDIX B) applied to the data- interview transcripts. This involved starting with an inductive open line-by-line analysis and ending with axial coding (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir 2016: 34) to harmonise the codes. Boko (2024) in her application of thematic analysis to the detection of disinformation notes that this approach allows for a deeper and more thorough comprehension of disinformation, serving as the foundation for emergent evidence-based responses (Pg. 1915). This is even more important for a study grounded in addressing an existing gap in the study of climate disinformation, potentially signposting a realistic grasp of the crisis of misleading environmental/climate information for the communities that are most vulnerable, which then informs the construction of effective responses. The relevance of Thematic Analysis to identifying best practice recommendations is also noted in Gisondi, *et al.* (2022: 3) study of 'Social Media, Ethics, and COVID Misinformation', pointing to its appropriateness as a methodological tradition for understanding and analysing information disorders in media studies.

The defining text of Braun and Clarke (2006) which provides concise guidelines for Thematic Analysis presents it as a foundational method for any form of qualitative analysis. They note that the theoretical flexibility associated with this methodology enables researchers to generate a comprehensive yet nuanced interpretation of data; but also note that the integrity associated with research calls for thematic analysis to be theoretically and methodologically sound (Pg. 78). Their work directly addresses the criticism of Thematic Analysis as less rigorous while acknowledging its 'limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it is not used

within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made' (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Therefore, this research locates its findings within the material impacts of disinformation from the fossil fuel industry, applying understanding of hegemony and elements of Marxist theory to its analysis. The theoretical framework underpinning this methodology, has been extensively explored in section 2 of this paper. Adopting Braun and Clarke's guiding questions, I unpack each theme in five layers; illustratively define its meaning; highlight the grounded assumptions of the theme; implication of the theme and its related conditions; theoretical evaluation of the communicated thematic findings. The integrated analysis of the thematic patterns modifies the use of Corbin and Strauss's six elements of axial coding traversing Phenomenon, Causal conditions, Context, Strategies, Consequences and Intervening conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which are applied directly to each theme. These identified patterns and connections were then synthesised into an overarching narrative.

### **Limitations, Ethics and Reflexivity**

This study employed a purposive sampling approach (Palinkas, *et al.* 2013) to select interview subjects from specific subsets within the community (Activists, Journalists and Fact-checkers), each with direct ties to the area and/or a verifiable body of work on the Niger-Delta. While interviewees represent the wider marginalised Niger Delta region, relative to interaction with the fossil fuel capitalists and Nigeria, they may also be considered as elites, having higher levels of education, income and access (Odendahl & Shaw, 2001) than most people within the Niger Delta. While this holds a risk of subjectivity, the individual in-depth interaction and analytical focus on patterns ensures an epistemological level of reliability (Leung, 2015: 325). The most recognised resisters to the fossil fuel industry in Nigeria are Activists, with a long history of protests, campaigns and militancy<sup>9</sup>, in response to the destruction of the Niger Delta. However, their work is not focused on combatting information disorders, as it more broadly targets holding the extractive industry and its participants to account. Therefore, the inclusion of journalists and fact-checkers with expertise in climate change and the environment provide a necessary layer for integrating the technicalities of disinformation into the discourse.

Attempts were made to include academics but their availability within the timeline stipulated for this research process was a limiting factor.

The audio recordings of the 7 interviews were transcribed into text. The transcript was inductively coded, generating a total of 207 open codes. These were then grouped into a total of 80 codes, 19 loosely related categories (Sub-themes) to establish connections and relationships. Using the codebook (See Appendix B) as a guide, these categories were then linked to six broad thematic areas: Oil spills, Conflict & Ignorance, Government, Media, Harm and Community. As highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2023: 5) the analysis outcome can be a meaning-based interpretative story, drawn from seeking to understand the underlying meanings, assumptions, and conceptual frameworks that shape participants' experiences.

In line with requirements for ethical research, I obtained institutional approval for this study then proceeded to provide an informed consent sheet to participants, particularly highlighting the sensitive political context surrounding fossil-fuel resistance in Nigeria's Niger Delta and noting their participation as voluntary, with a given date by which they can withdraw from the study if the need to do so arises. As the use of digital platforms for the research presents a risk of data security and privacy, all interviews were conducted on the Microsoft Teams account, provided by the London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE. Further confidentiality was afforded participants by anonymising their interviews, identifiable with assigned codes to reflect their industry expertise. I admit that my preconceptions about fossil-fuel imperialism greatly influenced my interpretation and theoretical approach to this study. However, this positionality is informed by five years of experience as a journalist reporting on climate change and monitoring disinformation in vulnerable communities across Nigeria. Rather than serving as confirmation bias, it guides the study towards a nuanced understanding of climate and environmental disinformation, from a global south perspective.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

An evaluation of the findings of this study requires a quick look at the elements of the research question to properly situate the emerging themes from the interviews. The RQ, as noted in Section 2 interrogates the influence of fossil-fuel industry disinformation on environmental justice struggle, necessitating: first, an understanding of disinformation narratives and its flow in the Niger Delta then a theoretical discussion of how these narratives have impacted environmental justice for the communities. Following this structure, six themes materialised and are extensively evaluated in the following subsections.

In the narrative that emerges, environmental justice in Nigeria's Niger Delta remains in contestation with the continued extraction and exploitation of oil by multinational fossil fuel corporations in the Niger Delta. This constitutes an economic base that fundamentally shapes false narratives designed to maintain hegemonic ideological edge sustaining unequal social relations and oppressive power structures in the region. The disinformation fuelled hegemony extends beyond maintaining and justifying the economic dominance of oil companies and the state elite to creating an interlocking superstructure that perpetuates structural violence, repression and destruction of Niger Delta communities.

### **Oil Spills**

Amongst interviewees, there was consistent reference to oil spill incidents, mentioned 50 times in the transcript and its positioning as central to the consistent denial from the oil corporations operating in the Niger Delta. Five participants specifically identified the pollution from oil spills as the most significant reference point for misleading narratives they have identified from companies like Shell, Total and EP. They pointed out that the denial narratives and strategies employ institutional reports, coordinated/uncoordinated campaigns and exploitation of the government's dependence on oil companies to pinpoint sabotage from third parties, described as vandals in the community as responsible for the resulting environmental disaster from the continuous spills in the region. The attribution of these spills to sabotage has been recognised as carefully curated to position the corporate version of these incidents as

authentic and disclaimers from the community as unobjective and exploitative (Egbon & Mgbame., 2020). For instance, the Shell Petroleum Development corporation attributed 75% of spills incidence recorded in 2009 to 2013 as caused by intentional third-party interference with pipelines and infrastructure (Bodo & Gimah, 2020: 174; Kadafa, 2012: 42).

*Whenever there is a spill, there's always a narrative that there has been bunkering activity perpetuated by communities. And you know, leaders of community, community leaders, chiefs have actually accepted that these boys are criminals and the culprits. So whenever there is a spill, they don't even try to find out the cause. They will just say that that they have gone to destroy pipelines again.- AT1*

Contradictory to this admission that some members of the community also blame its young people for oil spill, this activist and the remaining six interviewees also insist that Niger Deltans are not 'fooled' by the tactics of the oil conglomerates whose interest is identified as filtering realities of the community to external interests. It may thus be inferred that this disinformation also serves to maintain a false consciousness, keeping the subaltern unaware of its own ideological reproduction of the dominant narrative. The epistemological construction of the Niger Delta as an extremely volatile area and its youth as destructive (Tantua & Kamruzzaman, 2016) feeds into this narrative. Their position is afforded further credibility, with institutional justification and agreement reflected in the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, NOSDRA's categorisation of oil spill incidents in Nigeria's Niger Delta as shown in the image below.

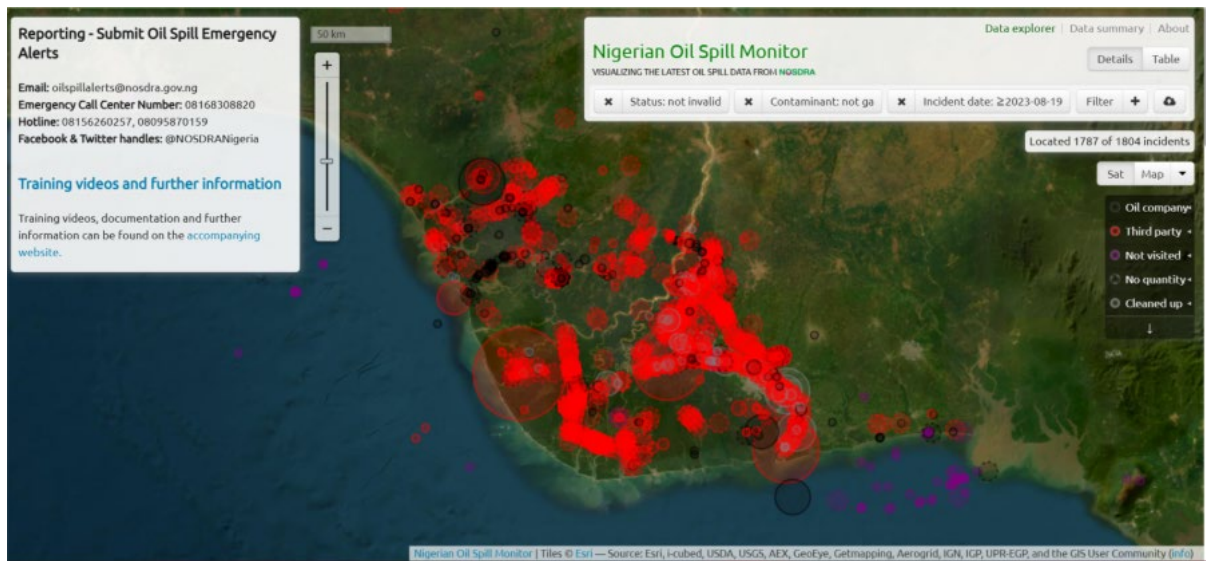


Figure 2: Distribution of documented oil spill perpetrators. (Nigeria Oil Spill Monitor, 2025)

This dynamic is referenced several times by interviewee J1, who describes it as a systematic disinformation, caused by the government's dependence on oil companies to fund its investigations.

'So because these government officials, they work in line with whatever the company tells them, like when they say this particular spill is not caused by us, it is caused by the Community. They're not independent, even if they say that they are independent.'

*They will not go and do their own investigation because they don't have the funding. Government is not giving any fund, so the agency is underfunded. You understand..... and when the company calls them, they are the one paying for everything the agency uses to get to that place. They put them in private jets and pay for every single thing. He who pays the piper dictates the tune so they will never attribute the oil spill to the company but to the community...*

Six of seven interviewees (AT1, AT2, AT3, JR1, JR2, FC1) allude to the significance of the denials in detail highlighting the avoidance of responsibility to the community as the main driver of the disinformation related to the oil spills. In declaring the community vandals and sabotage as the primary cause of oil spills, backed by state support, the oil companies are not

required to pay damages and compensation to affected families although the Nigerian law still requires them to clean up<sup>10</sup>.

The consensus here is that oil spill incidents function effectively as environmental catastrophes but also as pivotal events where the hegemony- capitalist system enacts and amplifies disinformation to safeguard profit, obscure structural causes, and reinforce ruling class power (Oreskes & Conway, 2010). The institutional support emphasises the existence of a pattern of structural relations to perpetuate existing hierarchies (Cardos, 1978: 15). We can thus borrow from Herman and Chomsky's 'propaganda model' (1989) to highlight the collaboration of state and corporate power, contributing to a regime where challenging the oil industry's narrative is structurally discouraged.

### **Conflict & Ignorance**

There is an 'epistemic disconnect' created by physical and mental distance between investors and affected communities, which facilitates strategic ignorance and a denial of the complex sociopolitical realities of extractive operations. (Bovensiepen, 2020). In Nigeria's Niger-Delta, this is suggested to be fostered by the deliberate deception from oil companies to its investors. Participants in this study all agree that the Niger-Delta and its people are falsely presented in global spaces where they are significantly absent, as thankful beneficiaries of the oil companies' magnanimity and its challenges, framed as self- inflicted, without any input from the pollution and extractive activities (Amabipi, 2016). This deception, already sanctioned by the state in the presentation of Niger Deltans as mostly responsible for environmental pollution, benefits even further from local conflict. All interviewees mention the term 'community conflict' tying it directly to the avoidance of responsibility for environmental damages by oil conglomerates. Integral to this conflict are two identified pillars; the funding of a minority, sponsored by fossil-fuel companies to support its interests and the use of compensation to divide communities into factions.

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<sup>10</sup> Hanock, K. (n.d.). Nigerian oil spill case to proceed to UK trial as 'nuisance' law refined. *Pinsent Masons*. <https://www.pinsentmasons.com/out-law/news/nigerian-oil-spill-uk-trial-nuisance-law>

The divide and rule tactics are reminiscent of the manufacture of differences in colonised societies to prevent unified opposition (Morrock, 1973). Thus, the oil companies maintain control and impede the development of a class-based emergence of solidarity. .... notes that the state and multinationals benefit from this fragmented population, less capable of organising to reclaim sovereignty and effectively push for environmental justice. By weakening internal resistance, external justification for the ongoing exploitation of the region and its natural resources is strengthened. Speaking to this point, AT3 highlights that their attendance at the annual general meeting of Shell helped them realise how the Niger Delta, its people and the destruction of its ecology were not fully understood in its ramifications outside of Nigeria. Similarly, JR2 notes that this deception is routine.

*When we are talking about the sophistication of their campaign, this is not really a campaign. For the company, they are doing the normal thing which they are presenting to their stakeholders. So anytime they meet in London every year or I think twice every year or whenever they meet, they would make everything appear real. You know, it is for their own benefit and for the benefits of shareholders.*

Community leaders are primarily identified as part of what one participant calls the 'corrupt' minority, introducing a third layer to the institutionalised disinformation arbiters discrediting the injustices faced by Niger Deltans. AT1 also defines this manufactured conflict as a 'distraction'. They note that its sole purpose is to discredit the indigenous populations and their claims over the region's degraded environmental resources; a sentiment re-echoed by other participants.

*There are instances of the multinationals bribing community heads, community leaders. You know, to serve more like their mouthpiece. Like we would say in Nigeria, jam heads together and put them in disarray. You know, put them in this commotion against each other to fight so that they will continue doing so. There have been cases of bribing, corruption. I mean, the bribery of community heads and.....- JR2*

*They pitch communities against themselves....by giving them money to share. By ringing money in between communities and having them fight over is while they are busy knowing that they have no*

*distractions. But on their websites or during meetings they will say that they want to make peace between communities and also ensure that everything goes smoothly. Pushing that kind of narrative, which is, you know, falsehood in in every sense.”- JR 1*

The weaponisation of divisions is perceived to culminate in a strategic erasure of oil pollution realities, rewriting history in favour of the fossil-fuel companies through a shift in focus to a community in conflict rather than the existing environmental injustices. Conflict thereby is implied as a disinformation tactic that serves to manufacture ignorance for the profiteers of fossil fuel’s denial of the environmental degradation in Niger Delta. Further to this, it makes collective resistance harder while securing continued extraction and exploitation. Unacknowledged however is the aftermath where in the same manner that enduring social conflict persists long after formal colonialism ends (Blanton, *et al.*, 2001), the Niger Delta as evident in current literature (Uvie, 2010) is now widely acknowledged as a society characterised by divisive interests (Faga & Ngwoke, 2021: 231-232), violent struggles and complicated revolutionary movements seeking justice.

## **Media**

The Marxist perspective positions the media as part of the institutional bodies that make up a superstructure, serving primarily to reinforce the dominant ideologies of the hegemonic class and reinforce the base for their economic power (Silke, 2015). Although interviewees subscribed to this perspective by assigning the role of active participants in the disinformation networks that advance the objectives of oil companies to legacy media (TV, Radio, Print) and social media (Facebook, X, LinkedIn. Etc.), they also understood both media channels to be contested platforms, simultaneously serving as tools for potent advocacy that strengthen environmental justice movements.

For legacy media, of particular interest to AT1, AT2, AT3 and AT4 was the culpability of the Nigerian Media community through the verbatim publication of press statements received from oil companies providing it more platform; and the transactional relationship between editors of major newsrooms and oil companies. FC1 however suggested that Nigerian legacy

media lacks the technical and material resources to be meticulous. The resource scarcity concern emerges again when JR2 insists that the media cannot afford to conduct its own independent investigations of oil spill data and by relying entirely on what the NOSDRA monitoring platform provides, they play a huge role in normalising disinformation around oil spills in the Niger Delta. This is summed up by AT1 and JR1 as ‘caused by media platforms focus on profit and its interest in pleasing the government.’

*The media has played a very prominent role in spreading false information, especially when they have guests that don't really know what they're talking about. They just want to say something to please the government. So yeah, there are those are the people, and it is not because it is their original idea. It was sold to them by money.- AT1*

*When the company pays for commercials and press releases, they also have their own journalists, so they pay for their own press releases that they want, and these organisations are focused on sponsorship and advertisement. So, because it's paid for, they'll just go through it and publish it like that. Some will write sponsored, some will write paid or just publish like that.- JR1*

Social media is however viewed as a slightly different platform, not utilised by the oil companies to spread specific disinformation on the Niger Delta but for greenwashing activities and the publication of false climate solutions. FC1, AT1 and AT2 specifically reference the dominant use of social media platforms by fossil-fuel companies to reinvent their images as environmentally friendly brands and push false climate solutions.

‘There is greenwashing from companies like Shell, by paying influencers and brands to greenwash. Their motive is primarily profit’ - FC1

*Social media is the platform that shares the most false information because communities know the actual details. They might not be educated on how to hold perpetrators accountable but are not taken in by token gestures of false climate solutions like carbon offset and carbon market. We have false information from well-intentioned people, even on LinkedIn and other social media spaces. Geoengineering, carbon offset, climate smart agriculture, blue economy are all fronting as climate friendly but are not actually best for the environment. - AT1*

All participants however acknowledged it also offers environmental justice advocates a platform to challenge recognised disinformation narratives from fossil-fuel companies.

'Even on social media, when there is an oil spill. People can come online and share details of what is actually happening in the community so that the companies cannot lie.' - AT3

AT2 challenges this assumed benefit, noting that the opportunities that social media offers activists is also limited by its mass use that allows people with no awareness of the foundational issues to discredit the work of activists, attributing it to a selfish motive, further limiting its positive impact on environmental justice movements. Embedded in this dichotomy, is the view that media platforms have a dialectical relationship with environmental injustice. On one hand, they are essential to counterhegemonic efforts, advancing community narratives and challenging denial claims. At the same time, environmental justice campaigns on media platforms are subject to profit-driven motives of media owners, scepticism from other media users and the popularity of what is referred to as false solutions, further concealing narratives on environmental harms in oil resource communities. Essentially, a contrast exists where the media acts both as a tool for perpetuating climate disinformation, thus deepening environmental injustices, and as a platform for challenging those narratives. This contradicts the highlighted role of the media as merely an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971), instrumental for perpetuating class-based hegemony through disinformation but also able to minimally foster resistance by facilitating exposure and a public sphere dialogue.

## **Government**

A pattern that stands out across all interviews is the role of the political institution as the legal machinery of force (Chinkin & Kaldor; 2017 Isaac, 2018) through which fossil fuel industry hegemony is maintained. Government entities are placed as protecting the fossil fuel industry, benefiting financially from oil interests, failing to indict polluters, accepting payments to influence investigations, providing militarised suppression of communities and not enforcing environmentally friendly policies.

Using Frantz Fanon's (1967) construct of the 'contradictions inherent in the colonial system strengthen and uphold the natives combatively while promoting and giving support to national consciousness', Uvie pinpoints the 'pseudo-nationalistic thrust that remains the transcript of contemporary Nigeria political order' and the heavily militarised nature of the region as a "dual mode of exploitation of Niger-Delta from within and without" (2010: 107). Aligning with this view, AT4 considers the government to be equal parties with the oil companies through its role in securing forced consent that stall action and divide environmental justice movements. But other interviewees describe the government as mostly ignorant or helpless, owing to Nigeria's status as a mono economy, entirely dependent on oil revenue (AT3 and JR2). Their referenced complicity emerges in three forms across all interviews; the direct participation of NOSDRA in shifting the blame for environmental damage away from oil polluters informed by a dependence on these companies, the use of military force to protect polluters location while unleashing violence on communities; and weak regulations that enable the continued environmental degradation.

*'Nigerian government lacks the willpower to tackle these guys and just to declare that the government makes a lot of money from these guys. They pay taxes in billions, and I mean the money. I don't think Shell has ever been penalised by the government or indicted publicly by the government in Nigeria.'*- JR2

One participant (AT3) highlights that government officials are active participants in the fossil fuel industry with interests such as shares and oil blocks, therefore already incentivised for profit to ensure the continued existence of these companies. Although noted by only two interviewees (AT4, FC1), the concern extended to how government agencies and officials align with the global focus of climate action, ignoring pressing issues in oil resource communities. This was classified as 'entrenched disconnect' from local realities and a major contributor to environmental injustice. AT4 particularly described it as a manifestation of the success of fossil-fuel global disinformation campaign on climate change noting that the focus of countries like Nigeria on inaccurate or confused narratives, often false climate solutions like carbon

offsetting and climate-smart agriculture were far removed from incidental environmental harms in affected communities.

*'There are government structures meant to help put everything on the table, but they barely help. Look at the Nigeria Climate Change Agency, NCCA being focused on climate finance and carbon markets, but they won't stop gas flaring in communities like Ororo where fire has been raging for the past five years. What do you say to that?'*- AT4

The consensus amongst participants is a conceptualisation of the state as crucial to the misrepresentation, and repression of the Niger Delta for capitalist production and reproduction, tied closely to maintaining the domination of the region, as defined by its interaction with the fossil fuel overlords. The import of this stance is that the 'executive committee of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie' (Marx & Engels, 2002: 4). Odoh and Nnaji (2021) are however quick to point out, this hegemonic alignment is rooted in coloniality, borne out of western capitalism and as such, the 'alliance between metropolitan bourgeoisie and the Nigerian State in the Niger Delta has become one characterised by protection of multinational interest' (Pg. 4, 5).

Notwithstanding this argument, participants largely present the Nigerian government as actively upholding fossil fuel dominance in the Niger Delta through direct involvement and structural complicity. The state's portrayal as financially entangled with oil interests, is seen to strategically repress community resistance, and maintain degraded conditions (Olajide & Ojatorotu, 2020: 525). This convergence of economic interests, governance failures, and external influence strengthen false narratives that prioritise international agendas, far removed from urgent local needs. Nonetheless, views differ on whether this results from calculated profiteering, inherent dependence on oil revenue, or both.

## **Harm**

One of the interview questions asked participants to quantify the influence of disinformation from the fossil-fuel industry on challenges faced by Niger Delta communities and the policy

direction on environmental justice issues. Of the 7 people surveyed, 71.43% (5 people) rated it an 8, and 28.57% (2 people) rated it a 7.

### Influence of Disinformation on Environmental Injustice in the Niger Delta

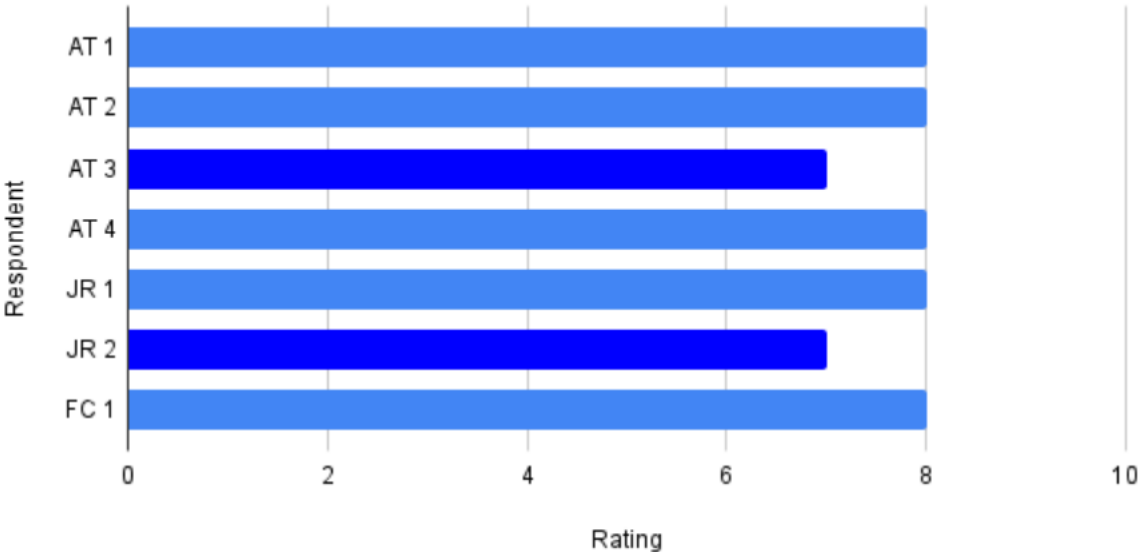


Figure 3- Representation of ratings from study participants for descriptive purposes

Their ratings were accompanied by narratives around how disinformation from the fossil fuel industry has destroyed lives and livelihoods but also succeeded in contributing to a global focus on climate solutions that do not address the destruction caused by the extractive industry in communities where these companies operate.

In a world now driven by platform economy and technology, the concept of illegality vs harm in disinformation discourses are largely situated online (Ó Fathaigh, *et al.*, 2021; Demirel, 2023; Soliman & Rinta-Kahila, 2024), with physical spaces considered to be negligible sites of information disorders. The impact of climate disinformation is therefore not surprisingly documented to emanate from publications, online messaging platforms and dedicated campaigns; with its harm concentrated on denying climate change causes and slowing action (Aïmeur, *et al.*, 2023; Hassan, *et al.*, 2024). This contrasts sharply with the interpretation of what

is assessed to be misinformation, disinformation and propaganda by individuals in oil resource communities. For these communities, disinformation harms are viscerally experienced, not as the secondary outcome of false narratives, but rather in conjunction with a lived reality of climate injustice. Such harms were described as internally evident in the destruction of lives and livelihoods, health consequences, and significant delays in remediation and faux clean-up processes which all impoverish the already marginalised communities. The external component of its impact was highlighted as fossil-fuel manipulation of environmental justice discourse through strategic rebranding and difficulty in achieving positive judicial outcomes for communities.

*Their recent branding as energy companies is a deliberate strategy to take attention away from their crimes. They are deliberate about whitewashing their images. Even at litigations, it takes enormous work to show that they are responsible and make them pay for their crimes, to the extent that it took several years for us to prove that the head companies are actually liable for the pollution caused by its subsidiaries in places like Nigeria. They also sponsor huge delegations to COP (Conference of Parties) events to influence discussions. The main reason they do all these is to fool investors; and that is why they do all they can to avoid a guilty pronouncement - AT4*

Grbeša Zenzerović & Nenadić (2022: 11) identify 'verifiability, intention and harm' as the key determinants of disinformation. Applying these benchmarks, the disinformation propagated by fossil fuel entities crystallises as purposeful for the decimation of oil resource communities, whose disempowerment is crucial for maintaining global capitalism, built on exploitative power relations. On the broad level, deliberate deception and strategic corporate practices reinforce the systematisation of environmental injustice and support fossil fuel companies to escape true accountability but these activities do not encompass the depth of how disinformation is experienced in Niger Delta communities. In speaking about the damage caused by these companies, the phrase 'climate colonialism' is repeated by some of the interviewees (FC1, JR2, AT1, AT3, AT4), underscoring the uneven geographic and social impacts of fossil fuel operations, with Niger Delta communities severely polluted and no easy access to justice. They all point out that in countries where these companies are headquartered

and in certain western nations where they have subsidiaries, communities are treated better and able to achieve environmental justice when aggrieved.

*'These guys are not polluting the environment where they're even based, where the whole money is going to, how come they're polluting ours? I don't know if you get my point. So, they guys are very aware of what they are doing.'* - JR2

Climate disinformation is thus reflected to disproportionately burden Niger Deltans, a subset of the wider black, Indigenous, and people of colour communities worldwide who are most affected by climate change and its impact (Baird, 2008). The race trajectory of this perspective links back to the idea of colonialism as fundamental to the making of the capitalist world system (Mignolo 2011; Quijano 2000) through constant cycles of epistemological production and reproduction, with material significance. The acknowledged intersectionality of race and class, as it relates to disinformation from the fossil-fuel industry was also extended by a general acknowledgment of its gendered dimensions from about half of the interviewees, with examples referenced depicting women and girls as more affected. This is indicative of hooks' concept of the 'interlocking web of oppression.' These structures of domination do not operate in isolation but rather intertwine and reinforce one another, forming a complex web that simultaneously grants privilege to some while entrenching marginalisation for others.

What does stand out is that the harm caused by climate disinformation is shown to perpetuate an epistemic and material cycle of historical injustice to inflict tangible damage on vulnerable communities. While the world pushes for discourses on combatting disinformation by addressing denialism to foster climate action (Mendy, 2024), the health, livelihoods and social cohesion of resource extractive regions are undermined by polluters evading accountability. The associated manipulation of knowledge and narratives deployed in this process, not only hampers local and global climate solutions but deepens existing social inequalities, reinforcing systems of exploitation and neglect.

## Community

Across the five themes already considered, the community emerges as central to this analysis, signposted as victim and resistor. One of the critiques of Marxism is its prediction of proletarian revolution and the collapse of the capitalist system (Sarkar, 1983). This critique is further enhanced by Althusser's account of an indoctrinated society, emphasising that the dominant class maintains power, not just through coercion but primarily through ideological consent in civil society. Harsin as cited by Bleakley (2018) however notes 'that the fragmented nature of the modern media landscape allows for a plurality of perspectives that fundamentally prevents a single, unified truth being agreed to and disseminated among a passive population.' This argument carries a risk of appropriation to justify information disorders but also prompts a different dialogue for the Niger Delta, symbolic to Nigeria for being the region that provides 95% of the country's revenue but also recognised as deeply conflicted from over 50 years of oil pollution.

A similar paradoxical representation of affected communities appears in the responses of each participant in this study. The complexities of disinformation in the region are evaluated as fuelling resistance, expressed through stand-offs, protest, organised campaigns and legal struggles with the oil companies where possible but also fractured by a need to survive and powerful sociopolitical parties who continue to support fossil-fuel interests.

*'You know, I had a workshop with the community, and they were telling me look at what the oil companies are saying on the newspaper and also, showed me the things they are reading on social media'- JR2*

*'It is only when the community members are present that you will see the companies agree that the community is not responsible for the spill. If not, it is always the case that companies are removing themselves. Only in cases where the community stays back, insists and drags that you will see the company admit.'- JR1*

*And this is where the community battles all the time. There are people within the communities who they empower. You know, this divide and rule is very evident in the communities. They empower very*

*few for obscene amounts of money who now oppress little ones. Because we are NGOs now, we can't buy and sell, we can't. We are underfunded and can only empower people who are strong enough to carry out those campaigns. So I'll say, yes, the companies leverage on the ignorance and poverty of communities."- AT2*

There is a recognition of active internal conflict amidst a deeply rooted awareness of being manipulated. But it also features resilience and continued struggle for accountability by affected communities, described by interviewees as having resulted in definitive small pockets of victories for the community such as winning court cases, public exposure of the oil conglomerates falsehoods and recent move by the ... to divest from the Niger Delta. Community efforts are considered to be weakened, not by these contradictions, but by a lack of government support and economic conditions. Therefore, resistance exists parallel to structural vulnerability, engineered dependency, and political threats. Interviewees highlight the community as knowledgeable about fossil-fuel tactics but also as misinformed on adaptation, mitigation and environmental restoration (AT4, FC1, AT3). Additionally, the widespread poverty in the region is held responsible for the residents' focus on compensation, as the most sought-after form of environmental justice.

The clear appreciation of these contradictions, exemplify the interplay between materialist struggle and hegemonic contestation from a critical media perspective. The conflict arises from the material realities of communities facing environmental degradation and economic dispossession at the hands of oil conglomerates, whose power is sustained through control over resources and a disinformation powered ideological manipulation of public perception. The resilience and community wins are representative of both material gains and counter-hegemonic acts that disrupt the dominant narratives justifying exploitation. Here, information disorders become battlegrounds as much as the degraded physical environment, with affected communities leveraging public exposure on media platforms, internal engagement and alternative discourses to challenge the hegemony of corporate power, demonstrating a dialectical relationship between material resistance and ideological struggle, in the pursuit of accountability and justice.

## CONCLUSION

The profound influence of fossil-fuel industry disinformation on the struggle for environmental justice in Nigeria's Delta region, reveals a complex interplay of corporate strategy, state complicity, and community resilience. The findings underscore that environmental justice in the region remains fiercely contested, fundamentally struggling with false narratives designed to maintain the economic dominance of multinational oil corporations and state elites. This configuration of disinformation in communities where extractive interests are present offer a more practical account of the impact of climate disinformation and hence, should inform the knowledge and practices that drive global efforts to combat the same. In the instance of the Niger Delta, a key mechanism of this disinformation involves attributing oil spill incidents, which are widespread and frequent, to third-party sabotage by 'vandals' within the community, thereby absolving companies like Shell, Total, and EP of responsibility for damages and compensation. This narrative is meticulously curated, often backed by institutional reports and exploiting the government's financial dependence on these oil companies, leading to a systematic denial of corporate culpability. Beyond direct denials, disinformation strategies incite local conflict to foster global ignorance as oil companies deliberately deceive the global audience while creating factions within the community to impede unified resistance and weakening internal opposition to ongoing exploitation. The media emerges as a "double-edged sword" with legacy media often perpetuating corporate narratives through verbatim publication of press releases and a transactional relationship while social media serves as a platform for corporate "greenwashing" and the promotion of 'false climate solutions.' However, both platforms are also considered to be effective avenues for environmental justice advocates to challenge disinformation and expose local realities.

Crucially, the government is identified as complicit in this set-up, focused on protecting fossil fuel interests, benefiting financially, and enabling continued environmental degradation through weak regulations and militarised suppression of communities. This entanglement often results in a disconnect from local realities, prioritising international climate agenda over

urgent community needs. This systematic deception is understood as purposeful compounded by the intersection of race, class, and gender. The overall impact is described in systemic and visceral terms, as denials affect communities' health and livelihoods, leading to strategic disempowerment and the frustration of remediation efforts. Despite these challenges, the communities persist, fully aware of the ongoing manipulation including its own participation in this process. In combatting the misrepresentation of its struggles and realities by the fossil fuel industry, the community turns inwards, persistent in collaborative action, media engagement, legal battles and confrontation, actively adapting as the situation demands and with instances of success in confronting fossil fuel's hegemony<sup>1112</sup>

The emerging themes powerfully illustrate that for extractive regions, that climate disinformation is not merely an online phenomenon but a tangible force inflicting profound, material damage, perpetuating historical injustices and undermining local and global climate solutions. Hence, there is an urgent need to root climate disinformation discourse in the lived realities of frontline communities.

As Shell now seeks to divest from Nigeria<sup>13</sup>, a process that has also been riddled with false narratives, The research underscores how deeply embedded fossil fuel industry disinformation is in the unjust economic and social construct of society. It demonstrates that disinformation isn't merely an abstract informational issue but a powerful force inflicting tangible, material damage. Scholars like Banaji (2024) and Edwards, et al. (2024) have sufficiently demonstrated the gap in the assumption that media literacy is the most effective mechanism for addressing the disinformation crisis. Additionally, there has been a growing call for increased research (Murphy, 2023) on the real-world harms and risks of information disorders towards a developing a more impactful response and while this study highlighted

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<sup>11</sup> Milieudéfensie. (2022, December). Frequently asked questions. Milieudéfensie. <https://en.milieudéfensie.nl/shell-in-nigeria/frequently-asked-questions>

<sup>12</sup> Kevin-Alerechi, E. (2023, September 26). Silent disaster: Eni's Nigerian subsidiary accused of causing major oil spill. The Ferret. <https://theferret.scot/eni-nigerian-subsidiary-causing-major-oil-spil>

<sup>13</sup> Osuaoka, I (2024, December). Shell's exit scam. *Africa Is a Country*. <https://africasacountry.com/2024/12/shells-exit-scam>. Retrieved August 21, 2025

community led efforts to combat disinformation from the fossil fuel industry, these were not deconstructed for epistemological understanding. Hence, further dedicated research is critically needed to meticulously investigate the strategies, communication pathways, and direct impacts of these community-led efforts against fossil fuel disinformation. Such studies could illuminate how particular counter-narratives gain traction, the role of specific advocacy tactics in exposing corporate deception, and the mechanisms through which legal or public pressure translates into tangible shifts in corporate behaviour or policy. By dissecting these hard-won successes, future scholarship can provide actionable insights and blueprints for other frontline communities and global efforts contributing to a more nuanced and effective approach in combating climate disinformation rooted in the realities of environmental justice struggles. This grounded understanding is essential for academic advancement and for informing genuinely equitable global responses to the climate crisis.

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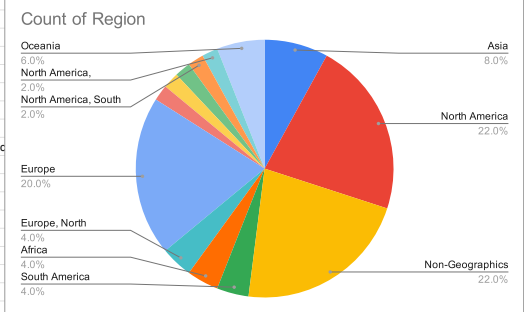
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NAME	AUTHOR	YEAR	LINK	GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Region
EXPLORING TURKEY'S DISINFORMATION ECOS	Baris Kirdemir	2020	<a href="https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26087?searchText=">https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26087?searchText=</a>	Turkey	Asia
Misinformation About Climate Change and Related I	Marilyne Vivion, Valérie Trottier, Ève Bouhélier, Isab	2024	<a href="https://www.researchprotocols.org/2024/1/e59345/">https://www.researchprotocols.org/2024/1/e59345/</a>	United States	North America
The Impact of Misinformation and Fake News on C	Miljane Marthasha Maite	2023	<a href="https://ijssrr.com/journal/article/view/1505">https://ijssrr.com/journal/article/view/1505</a>	Generic	Non-Geographics
Climate Change Misinformation in the United States	Neelam Thapa Magar, Binay Jung Thapa, Yanan Li	2024	<a href="https://www.mdpi.com/2673-5172/5/2/40">https://www.mdpi.com/2673-5172/5/2/40</a>	United States	North America
Information and misinformation about climate chang	Hesley M Silva	2022	<a href="https://www.academia.edu/111953055/Information_">https://www.academia.edu/111953055/Information_</a>	Brazil	South America
Human Cooperation and the Crises of Climate Paul A. M. Van Lange		2021	<a href="https://www.academia.edu/76338903/Human_Coop">https://www.academia.edu/76338903/Human_Coop</a>	Social Media	Non-Geographics
From Denial to the Culture Wars: A Study of Climate	Luis de Nadal	2024	<a href="https://www.academia.edu/130348785/From_Denial">https://www.academia.edu/130348785/From_Denial</a>	Social Media	Non-Geographics
Countering Climate Disinformation in Africa	Andrew Heffernan	2024	<a href="https://efaidnbmnnpbpcapccgclefndmkaj/https://ww">https://efaidnbmnnpbpcapccgclefndmkaj/https://ww</a>	Africa	Africa
How climate movement actors and news media fran	K Chen, AL Molder, Z Duan, S Boulianne, C Eckart,	2023	<a href="https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19401">https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19401</a>	Australia, Canada, United States, United Kingdom	Europe, North America
Trust and the media: Perceptions of climate change	H Cheng, J Gonzalez-Ramirez	2021	<a href="https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42438-020">https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42438-020</a>	United States	North America
Climate Misinformation: Communicating Climate Sci	Alysha Ulrich	2022	<a href="https://ojs.stanford.edu/ojs/index.php/intersect/articl">https://ojs.stanford.edu/ojs/index.php/intersect/articl</a>	Digital Publications	Non-Geographics
Combating Climate Change Misinformation: Curren	Liang Chen	2024	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17524">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17524</a>	China	Asia
Combating Climate Misinformation: Comparing the	Clara Christner, Pascal Merz, Berend Barkela, Herm	2024	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17524">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17524</a>	Germany	Europe
Developing an Ad Hominem typology for classifying	Sergei A. Samoilenko & John Cook	2024	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14693">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14693</a>	Digital Publications	Non-Geographics
From Denial to the Culture Wars: A Study of Climate	Luis de Nadal	2024	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17524">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17524</a>	Social Media	Non-Geographics
Does the Source of Inoculation Matter? Testing the	Bingbing Zhang & Juliet Pinto	2025	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08934">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08934</a>	United States	North America
Understanding Influences, Misinformation, and Fact	Waqas Ejaz, Muhammad Ittefaq & Muhammad Arif	2022	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17512">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17512</a>	Germany	Europe
Raising Climate Literacy Through Addressing Misinf	John Cook, Daniel Bedford & Scott Mandia	2014	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.5408/13-071">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.5408/13-071</a>	United Kingdom	Europe
Covering Synergistic Effects of Climate Change: G	Robert E. Gutsche Jr & Juliet Pinto	2022	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17512">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17512</a>	United States, United Kingdom	North America, Europe
Covering Environment and Climate Change in Turke	Mehmet Fath Çömlekçi	2025	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14616">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14616</a>	Turkey	Asia
Climate Journalism in East Africa in an Era of Misinf	Jackline Lidubwi & George Wamwea	2023	<a href="https://earthjournalism.net/sites/default/files/2024-06">https://earthjournalism.net/sites/default/files/2024-06</a>	East Africa	Africa
FUELING THE CLIMATE CRISIS: EXPOSING BIG OIL'S DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT CLIMATE ACTION	US Government	2021	<a href="https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117/hr">https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-117/hr</a>	United States	North America
Blueprint of a smokescreen: Introducing the validate	Spampatti T, Brosch T, Mumenthaler C, Hahnel UJJ	2025	<a href="https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40682248/">https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40682248/</a>	United Kingdom	Europe
Climate Change Disinformation and How to Combat	Stephen Lewandowsky	2021	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-pub">https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-pub</a>	United States	North America
Disinforming the unbiased: How online users exper	Wolff, L., & Taddicken, M.	2022	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/146146482">https://doi.org/10.1177/146146482</a>	Germany	Europe
Unravelling climate misinformation: fact-checking	of Mercè Cisneros, Jon X Olano Pozo, Anna Boqué-Ci	2025	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1088/2515-7620/ad37a">https://doi.org/10.1088/2515-7620/ad37a</a>	Spanish Speaking Region	South America
Psychological inoculation strategies to fight climate	Spampatti, T., Hahnel, U.J.J., Trutnevte, E. et al.	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01736-0">https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01736-0</a>	Multiple countries	Africa, Oceania, North America, Europe, Asia
A toolkit for understanding and addressing climate s	Homsey, M.J., Lewandowsky, S.	2022	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01463-y">https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01463-y</a>	Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom	Europe, Oceania, North America
Climate change litigation is growing and targeting	cc Setzer, J., & Higham, C	2021	<a href="http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/112632/">http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/112632/</a>	U.S. and Non-U.S. countries	North America
Combating Climate Disinformation: Comparing the	Christner, C., Merz, P., Barkela, B., Jungkunst, H., &	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2">https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2</a>	Germany	Europe
Exploring the stability and social influence dynamics	Yang, A	2025	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/0192243.2">https://doi.org/10.1080/0192243.2</a>	Social Media	Non-Geographics
Climate disinformation on the internet and social me	Bakowicz, K.	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.4467/2542254.MBK.24.014.208">https://doi.org/10.4467/2542254.MBK.24.014.208</a>	Western Countries	Europe, North America, Oceania
We need to tackle the growing threat of mis- and dis	PIatek S J., Haines A., Larson H J.	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2187">https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2187</a>	Generic	Non-Geographics
Analysis of climate change disinformation across ty	Hassan, I., Musa, R. M., Latiff Azmi, M. N., Razali Al	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/026666922">https://doi.org/10.1177/026666922</a>	Malaysia	Asia
Climate disinformation interventions: Negotiating leg	Ma, L.	2025	Retrieved from <a href="https://www.proquest.com/dissertatic">https://www.proquest.com/dissertatic</a>	United States	North America
Fuelling climate change disinformation: Global narra	Palau-Sampio, D., Crisóstomo Flores, P., & Picó Ga	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs_00110">https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs_00110</a>	North America, Europe and Latin America	North America, South America, Europe
Disinformation as an obstructionist strategy in climat	Gertrudix M, Carbonell-Alcocer A, Arcos R et al.	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.18180.2">https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.18180.2</a>	Literature Review	Non-Geographics
Climate Change Disinformation on Social Media: A	Essien, E. O.	2025	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14050304">https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14050304</a>	Social Media	Non-Geographics
Digital disinformation strategies of European climate	Moreno-Cabanillas, A., Castillero-Ostio, E., & Serna	2024	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.147034">https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.147034</a>	Europe	Europe
LIABILITY FOR PUBLIC DECEPTION: LINKING FC	Wentz, J., & Franta, B.	2022	<a href="https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/sabin_climate">https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/sabin_climate</a>	United States	North America
The language of late fossil capital	Dahlberg, L	2023	<a href="https://doi.org/10.2478/njms-2023-0010">https://doi.org/10.2478/njms-2023-0010</a>	United States, Western Countries	North America, Oceania, Europe
We need to tackle the growing threat of mis- and dis	PIatek S J., Haines A., & Larson, H. J.	2024	<a href="https://www.bmj.com/https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2187">https://www.bmj.com/https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2187</a>	Generic	Non-Geographics
In denial: An explorative study of disinformation aro	Hill, J., & Weulen Kranenborg, M.	2024	<a href="https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/denial-">https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/denial-</a>	Netherlands	Europe
Silencing the Voice: the fossil-fuelled Atlas Network	Walker, J.	2023	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v15.i2.8813">https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v15.i2.8813</a>	Australia	Oceania
Bots and online climate discourses: Twitter discours	Marlow, T., Miller, S., & Roberts, J. T.	2021	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1870098">https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1870098</a>	United States	North America
New bill loaded with climate money; progressives o	Balasta, S.	2021	<a href="https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/new-bill-load">https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/new-bill-load</a>	United States	North America
Beyond the discourse of denial: The reproduction of	Wright, C., Nyberg, D., & Bowden, V.	2021	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102094">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102094</a>	Australia	Oceania
Beyond the Discourse of Denial: the Reproduction o	University of Sydney	2021	<a href="https://global-factiva.com/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102094">https://global-factiva.com/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102094</a>	Australia	Oceania
Socioeconomic Roots of Climate Change Denial and	Lübke, C.	2022	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/cab035">https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/cab035</a>	Europe	Europe
Fuelling Denial: The Climate Change Reactionary M	Fowles, K.	2024	<a href="https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/fuelli">https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/fuelli</a>	Sweden	Europe



Level	Name	Descriptions
<b>Theme</b>	<b>OIL SPILLS</b>	<b>Highlights linking oil spill situation to false narratives associated with the community</b>
Sub-theme Codes	Evading Accountability	Deliberate actions by companies to avoid responsibility for oil spills or their consequences.
	Clean up	References to deceit in the restoration and remediation of areas affected by oil spills.
	Outright Denial	Complete refusal by responsible parties to acknowledge the occurrence or severity of an oil spill
Sub-theme Codes	Blaming Community	Shifting responsibility for spills onto local communities, often through misinformation or false narratives. Intentional concealment of information about spills, their causes, or their impacts.
	Coverup	Specific events or occurrences of oil spills, including their immediate and long-term effects.
	Incidents	Description of spills as caused by negligence, poor maintenance, or unsafe practices by oil companies
	Company fault	
	Environmental Negligence	Comments on company failure to adhere to environmental regulations or implement safety measures, leading to spills or pollution
	Remediation Del	Postponement or slow progress in addressing the environmental and social impacts of spills.
Sub-theme Codes	Exploit Situation	Taking advantage of spill events for pushing false narratives
	Mislead people	Descriptions of how public perception helps companies evade accountability.
	JIV Investigation	References to Joint Investigation Visits (JIVs) conducted to determine the cause and extent of spills, oas subject to bias and manipulation.
<b>Theme</b>	<b>IGNORANCE &amp; CONFLICT</b>	
Sub-theme Codes	Fractured advocacy	Deliberate efforts to divide or weaken unified community or activist responses to spills or disinformation. Challenges in community being fully aware of actions on accountability from oil companies
	Movement disunity	Lack of cohesion and infighting within activist or community groups as a result of external manipulations
Sub-theme Codes	Divisionary Tactic	Strategies used to create divisions within communities and activist groups to undermine their effectiveness.
	Activists excluded	Intentional exclusion of activists and community representatives during key events such as spill investigation, global presentation or negotiations w
	Money	Use of financial incentives to sustain community divisions
Sub-theme Codes	Double Narratives	Presentation of conflicting stories or explanations about corporate intentions and spill incidents
	Global Deception	International dissemination of false information to mislead global audiences about environmental issues or spills. Described as providing inaccurate or incomplete information at the top levels of fossil-fuel industry
	misinforming Shareholders	Misleading shareholders about environmental risks, impacts, or company practices in the Niger delta
<b>Theme</b>	<b>MEDIA</b>	
Sub-theme Codes	Positive Social Media Exposure	References to use social media platforms to enhance environmental justice activities
		The global reach of social media and how it serves to amplify narratives, coming directly from the community.

	Brand Value Relatable Content	Efforts by companies to protect against social media narratives that will dent their image  Description of social media as platform that helps create content relatable and engaging
Sub-theme Codes	Negative Social Media	Spread of misinformation, skepticism, or harmful narratives about spills or environmental issues on social platforms.
	False climate solutions	Promotion of ineffective or misleading solutions to climate change or pollution.
	Greenwashing	Misleading marketing or PR tactics that portray companies as environmentally responsible despite harmful practices.
	Doubters	Individuals or groups who question the severity or existence of spills or climate change, often influenced by disinformation.
Sub-theme	Positive legacy media	Traditional media (TV, print, radio) supporting advocacy efforts on environmental issues.

Codes	Activists Support	Media outlets amplifying the voices and concerns of activists or affected communities.
	Local media helpful	Local journalists or outlets playing a constructive role in reporting on spills and their impacts.
	Radio	Use of radio as a tool for community communication, education, or advocacy.
Sub -theme Codes	Negative Legacy Media	Traditional media outlets spreading disinformation, censoring critical reports, or prioritizing profit over truth.
	Editors	Role of media editors in supporting corporate oil narratives
	PR Influence Lack of Verification Profit driven	Public relations strength of oil companies designed to shape public perception in favor of companies or governments. Failure to fact-check or verify information before publishing, leading to the spread of misinformation  How the media prioritised revenue over accurate reporting
<b>Theme</b>	<b>HARM</b>	<b>Highlights of how disinformation narratives and efforts harms communities</b>
Sub-theme Codes	Violence	Physical harm or threats against activists, community members, or journalists reporting on spills.
	Lives Lost	Fatalities resulting from advocacy efforts to confront false narratives about spills
	Community slander	Misleading portrayals of communities in media or public discourse.
Sub-theme Codes	Health	Descriptions of health impacts, resulting from the lack of accountability enabled by false narratives
	Hunger Waterbodies Pollution	Food insecurity caused by pollution of water bodies, farmland, or loss of livelihoods.  Contamination of rivers, lakes, or oceans due to spills, affecting ecosystems and communities.
	Silencing	Suppression of narratives from community as a result of misinformation efforts

Sub-theme Codes	Intersections	Overlapping social, economic, and environmental impacts of spills, often disproportionately affecting marginalised groups.
	Racial colouration	Racial disparities in the impacts of spills or environmental policies.
	Gendered impact	Disproportionate effects of spills or disinformation on women, including health, economic, and social consequences.
	Loss of livelihood	Descriptions of impact on individual and community businesses
<b>Theme</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	
Sub-theme Codes	Resistance	Community-led efforts to oppose disinformation related to spills and exploitation. Ongoing initiatives by communities to address spills or advocate for justice.
	Current efforts	
	Gaps	Unmet needs or challenges in community responses, <b>Actionable proposals for disinformation as it impacts community</b>
	Specific Recommendations	
Sub-theme Codes	Limitations	Barriers to effective community action
	Internal Sabotage	Community members undermining their own resistance efforts, intentionally or unintentionally.
	External Sabotage	Outside actors disrupting or weakening community resistance.
	Leaders	Role of community leaders in contributing to undermining resistance efforts
Sub-Theme Codes	Wins	Successful outcomes of community resistance, such as legal victories or policy changes. Attempts by company to withdraw from the region
	Divestment	Court rulings in favour of the community
	Legal Victories	Other specific examples of impact from community responses and efforts to combat disinformation
	Community Institutions	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	
Sub-Theme Codes	Force	Use of police or military to suppress protests or dissent
	Harrass protested	Intimidation of individuals advocating for environmental justice.

	Militarisation	Increased presence or involvement of military forces in the Niger Delta
	Threats	Other intimidation tactics used by government officials or agents to silence opposition
Sub-theme Codes	Regulatory Weak	Inadequate laws, enforcement, or penalties to prevent spills or hold polluters accountable.
	Weak fines	Insufficient financial penalties for environmental violations, failing to deter harmful practices.
	Courts unhelpful	Descriptions of how local judicial system fails to support community or environmental justice.
Sub-theme Codes	Govt deceived	Government officials misled by disinformation or corporate influence.
	Fossil Dependent	Government reliance on funding from fossil fuel companies, leading to conflicts of interest or inaction.
	Sharing formula	Agreements or policies governing the distribution of oil revenues, often favoring corporations over communities.
	Lack of independence	Government agencies or officials influenced by corporate or political interests.
	Institutional	Government approval of false narratives about community

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