



Niger Delta Visual Art: A Study Of its Environment and Management

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Abstract

The Niger Delta region embodies a stark paradox: immense petroleum wealth coexisting with severe environmental degradation that has systematically eroded ecological integrity and human well-being. While scholarship has extensively documented the biophysical and socio-economic dimensions of this crisis, the region's visual art, particularly the sculptural practice of Edewor (2014), whose "Modern Niger Delta Formalism" synthesizes traditional Urhobo Ivri forms with discarded petroleum infrastructure remains peripheral to formal environmental management discourse. This article advances a tripartite interdisciplinary framework positioning Niger Delta visual art alongside ecological ethics and environmental management science as co-equal partners in framing sustainable responses to the region's crisis. Drawing on Akpezi Edewor's (2021 and 2025) analysis of the anthropocentrism, ecocentrism spectrum, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and empirical findings on the agricultural viability of Delta State's marginalized hydric soils, the article triangulates formalist art analysis, normative ethics, and soil science to argue that visual art constitutes a distinctive form of environmental knowledge production making it an aesthetic epistemology that complements technical and regulatory interventions. The analysis demonstrates that sustainable environmental stewardship in the Niger Delta requires integrating cultural and imaginative resources with ethical frameworks and empirical science, yielding a holistic management model with implications for policy, education, and future research.

Keywords: *Niger Visual Arts, Environment, Management, Ivri, Formalism*

Introduction

The scholarly terrain intersecting Niger Delta visual art, environmental degradation, and ecological management spans multiple disciplines yet remains fragmented along lines rarely bridged in a single analytical framework. This article surveys four interconnected bodies of literature; environmental crisis documentation, ecological ethics and SDG frameworks, artistic responses to degradation, and

environmental science approaches to land management. It identifies the lacuna it addresses: the absence of a triangulated analysis reading visual art, ecological ethics, and environmental science as mutually informing dimensions of the Niger Delta predicament.

The Niger Delta Environmental Crisis.

A substantial body of scholarship has established the magnitude of environmental

degradation in the region. Akpomuvie (2011) frames the crisis through Hardin's "tragedy of the commons," documenting that between 1976 and 1996 over 4,835 oil spillages were recorded in Nigeria, with the Niger Delta bearing the disproportionate burden. Nigeria flares more gas than any other petroleum-producing country placing it approximately 76% of associated gas as of the early 1990s, compared to a global average below 5% (Akpomuvie, 2011). Enyoghasim et al. (2019) demonstrate econometrically that a unit increase in CO₂ emissions reduces life expectancy in the region by 0.04%, with the model explaining approximately 96% of variation in health outcomes. Adekola et al. (2016) document how local communities face "formidable environmental challenges that generate conflicts and concerns around exploitation, environmental impact, and health risks." Nduka et al. (2016) detail the acidic aerosols from gas flaring and refinery operations, with several thousand tons of flue gas components, dust particles, SO_x, NO_x, and volatile organic compounds, released annually. Ugochukwu (2008) links degradation directly to economic impoverishment, catalyzing youth restiveness and militancy. Anyanwu (2021) and Umar and Othman (2017) address the political economy through film analysis and confirmatory factor analysis of pipeline vandalism respectively.

Ecological Ethics and SDG Frameworks.

Parallel to degradation documentation, a normative literature has developed around ecological ethics. Bennett et al. (2018) propose a comprehensive framework for "local environmental stewardship," disaggregating it into actors, motivations, capacity, context, actions, and outcomes. The SDGs have emerged as a predominant organizing framework. Howes et al. (2017) identify policy failure as systemic rather than incidental, while Wenibowei (2018) finds significant enforcement shortcomings in Nigeria's 1991 National Policy on Environmental Pollution Control. Lawrence et al. (2025) identify constraining factors such as institutional weakness, corruption, and the

resource curse, which impede sustainable development. The intersection of indigenous knowledge and environmental management has received growing attention: Jessen et al. (2021) examine Indigenous Knowledge contributions to ecological understanding, Ruíz-Mallén and Corbera (2013) demonstrate how traditional ecological knowledge enhances resilience, and Ansah et al. (2022) call for urgent conservation action in the Niger Delta as "a biodiversity hotspot."

Visual Art and Cultural Responses.

The most directly relevant scholarship concerns artistic responses to environmental degradation. Ophori (2024) examines Nelson Edewor's sculptures as "artistic resistance against the socio-economic and political challenges in contemporary Nigeria, particularly those stemming from oil exploration." Edewor's Ivri sculptures (since 1997) depict figures overwhelmed by oil barrels, employing what he terms "modern Niger Delta formalism"; a synthesis of traditional Urhobo/ Isoko Ivri forms with petroleum pipe elements and industrial detritus. Ophori and Maky-Yasoro (2024) analyse Sokari Douglas Camp's deployment of steel in sculptures addressing "the plight of the Niger Delta region." Akpang (2021) examines the "cultural ramifications of the found object in contemporary African art." Literary dimensions include Ogungbemi's (2024) analysis of Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* as "literary militancy," Osita's (2026) concept of "colonial energy genres," and Uy's (2022) EcoGothic reading. Further contributions span Ojaide and Watson (Olughu, 2019), ecofeminist readings of Agary (Ufuoma, 2023), and Niger Delta poetry (Okuyade, 2021). Cinematic interventions such as *Delta Blues*, *The Nigerian Oil Thieves*, *The True Price of Crude Oil*, are analyzed by Okpadah (2022), while Abakporo and Ohenhen (2024) examine indigenous dance as environmental stewardship. Castro-Koshy and Roux (2020) underscore how Indigenous artistic practices serve as critical lenses on environmental issues, and Areo and Kalilu (2013)

demonstrate how Yoruba Adire textile motifs encode ecological knowledge.

Environmental Science and Land Management.

A fourth strand approaches the Delta's challenges through soil science and hydrology. Seiyaboh (2017) reviews gas flaring impacts on vegetation and water; Ite et al. (2018) document petroleum hydrocarbon contamination of surface water and groundwater. Xie et al. (2020) provide a bibliometric analysis contextualising the Delta's soil crisis globally. The hydric soils study of Delta State, engaging Kingsford et al.'s (2016) characterization of wetlands as "conservation's poor cousins", provides empirical evidence challenging the neglect of marginalized soils and offering pathways for sustainable land utilization aligned with SDGs 12 and 13.

Locating the Gap.

This review reveals a landscape in which the Niger Delta's environmental crisis has been extensively documented, its ethical and governance dimensions theorized, its artistic responses analyzed with increasing sophistication, and its soil and water systems empirically investigated. Yet each literature has developed in isolation. No study has attempted a systematic triangulation of visual art, ecological ethics, and environmental science as complementary modes of knowledge production. This article addresses that gap by bringing Edewor's sculptural formalism, the ecological ethics and SDG framework, and the hydric soils evidence into a single analytical architecture demonstrating that art, ethics, and science can function as an integrated "management triad" for confronting environmental crisis in the Niger Delta.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a tripartite theoretical architecture: eco-criticism and the discourse of toxic contamination, the anthropocentrism, ecocentrism ethical spectrum operationalized through the SDGs, and postcolonial formalism as a framework

for interpreting aesthetic strategies of environmental protest.

The first lens draws on the eco-critical tradition, which treats cultural texts as active interventions in environmental discourse. Lawrence Buell's "toxic discourse", the rhetorical strategies through which communities voice experiences of contamination resonates powerfully with a region where 4,835 oil spillages were recorded between 1976 and 1996 (Akpomuvie, 2011) and where gas flaring has acidified rainfall across vast territories (Nduka et al., 2016). Complementing this, Rob Nixon's "slow violence" attritional destruction dispersed across time, eluding spectacular representation, has been applied to Niger Delta literary production by Awele (2015), who demonstrates how narratives articulate a "slow genocide" of cumulative harm. Hardin's "tragedy of the commons," deployed by Akpomuvie (2011), illuminates the structural paradox whereby petroleum resources constituting Nigeria's principal revenue are extracted through processes destroying the ecosystems upon which Delta inhabitants depend.

The second pillar draws on environmental ethics: the spectrum between anthropocentrism (nature valued instrumentally for human welfare) and ecocentrism (intrinsic value accorded to ecological systems independent of utility). The SDGs, particularly Goals 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), and 15 (Life on Land), provide an operational framework mediating this spectrum, representing a global consensus that human development and ecological integrity are interdependent. Lebel et al. (2006) offer complementary governance perspective: managing resilience requires participatory deliberation, polycentric institutions, and accountable authorities pursuing distributive justice. Where eco-criticism describes what is, SDG ethics articulates what ought to be.

The third strand, being postcolonial formalism, addresses what neither eco-criticism nor ethics alone can fill: the specifically aesthetic strategies through which Niger Delta artists

transmute crisis into visual meaning. This approach attends seriously to material and compositional properties while situating formal choices within the historical context of colonial and neo-colonial resource extraction. Nelson Edewor's synthesis of traditional Ivri sculptural forms with industrial petroleum pipes constitutes what may be termed a *material mimesis of contamination*: the very substance of oil infrastructure is incorporated into the sculptural object, making the source of degradation physically present in the artwork that protests it. This formalist reading is enriched by indigenous semiotic traditions: Areo and Kalilu (2013) demonstrate that Yoruba Adire motifs constitute a sophisticated visual language encoding cultural knowledge, implying that contemporary artists draw on and transform indigenous grammars rather than imitating Western conventions. Together, these three lenses constitute an integrated analytical apparatus adequate to the complexity of Niger Delta visual art as both environmental testimony and resource for ecological management.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary research design integrating three complementary strands.

The first strand employs formalistic and iconographic art historical methods to examine Edewor's sculptural oeuvre, proceeding through formal analysis (materiality, composition, synthesis of Ivri elements with petroleum pipe aesthetics) and iconographic appraisal (decoding symbolic meanings embedded in hybrid forms), following methodological precedents in contemporary Nigerian sculpture scholarship (Ophori, 2024). This is augmented by biographical survey and draws on art activism and social realism frameworks. The visual semiotic methods developed for analysing indigenous African art forms (Areo & Kalilu, 2013) and the concept of "visual sovereignty" (Tamaira, 2015) further inform the interpretive protocol.

The second strand undertakes documentary analysis of Akpezi Edewor's (2021) ecological ethics framework, employing critical discourse analysis to map normative arguments onto the seventeen SDGs and evaluating the extent to which existing regulatory frameworks, including Nigeria's Environmental Impact Assessment Decree of 1992, embody or deviate from identified ethical principles (Akpomuvie, 2011).

The third strand conducts secondary analysis of the hydric soils study's empirical findings, reinterpreting published data through the lens of environmental management to assess implications for SDG-aligned land-use policy. Integration proceeds through a triangulation protocol wherein findings from each strand are brought into critical conversation bearing an architecture mirroring pluridisciplinary approaches increasingly advocated in Indigenous environmental scholarship (Castro-Koshy & Roux, 2020). Limitations include the confinement to a single artist's oeuvre, reliance on published texts rather than primary data, and constraints of the original hydric soils dataset, mitigated by the study's exploratory, theory-building purpose.

Results I: Visual Art as Environmental Testimony

The visual art emerging from the Niger Delta constitutes a forensic register of environmental harm. A mode of testimony rendering visible what political and corporate discourse systematically occludes. Across sculptural practice, ideographic systems, and documentary cinema, Niger Delta artists have developed a distinctive visual grammar calibrated to petro-capitalist environmental violence.

At the centre of this analysis stands Nelson Edewor's sculptural oeuvre, characterized as "modern Niger Delta formalism." His formal innovation resides in synthesizing two ostensibly incommensurable visual lexicons: traditional Urhobo/ Isoko Ivri sculptural forms and the industrial aesthetics of petroleum pipelines. The Ivri, a carved wooden figure associated with ancestor veneration and spiritual mediation, carries

deep cultural semiotics. By grafting this traditional form onto the material vocabulary of oil infrastructure, Edewor creates a *petro-Ivri*: a hybrid language in which the sacred geometry of ancestral sculpture is rendered in or juxtaposed with industrial materials. The effect constitutes a formal argument about the colonization of the Niger Delta lifeworld by extractive infrastructure, a visual demonstration that the pipeline has displaced the ancestor as the organizing presence in Delta communities.

Ophori (2024) situates Nelson Edewor's practice within art activism and social realism, reading the sculptures as "socio-political, cultural, and economic tools for critiquing institutions and advocating for change." The use of corroded pipe segments does not merely allude to petroleum infrastructure; the corrosion itself, preserved in the sculptural object, constitutes a material trace of the chemical processes of oxidation, acidification, hydrocarbon leaching that have rendered Delta soils and waterways toxic. This is *material mimesis*: the artwork incorporates the substances of harm into its formal structure, collapsing the distance between representation and referent.

The concept of "visual sovereignty" (Tamaira, 2015), an aesthetic strategy through which indigenous artists articulate Native epistemologies and political struggles offers a productive comparative framework. Edewor's practice enacts comparable sovereignty: by reasserting the Ivri form within and against petroleum extraction's material culture, the work refuses the representational regime imposed by oil capital and asserts a Delta-centred visual epistemology.

This visual sovereignty operates also at the level of the sign. The Ibie'ka ideographic project (Edewor, 2017) constitutes a systematic attempt to develop a contemporary visual sign system capable of expressing Niger Delta lived experience in an era of petroleum exploitation. Where Edewor's sculpture operates through material synthesis, Ibie'ka operates at the semiotic level, generating a vocabulary of visual signs encoding Delta environmental experience: oil

spills, gas flares, polluted waterways, displaced communities. Just as Adire motifs draw symbolic content from "history, legends, myths, proverbs, folklore and deep observation of the environment" (Areo & Kalilu, 2013), Ibie'ka ideographs draw referential content from the petro-contaminated landscape.

The environmental conditions to which these practices testify are not subtle. Between 1976 and 1996, 4,835 oil spillages were recorded, averaging 440 per annum. Approximately 25% of total oil spilled occurred in swamps. The chemical components of flared gas, hydrocarbons, sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, hydrogen sulphide have produced acid rain leaching soil nutrients and contaminating surface water across the region (Akpomuvie, 2011). These are the material substrate of the visual testimony examined here.

Documentary film constitutes the third major modality. Okpadah's (2022) analysis of *Delta Blues*, *The Nigerian Oil Thieves*, and *The True Price of Crude Oil* employing Ivakhiv's biocentric ecocriticism, demonstrates how these films practice *cinematic witnessing*: documenting not only physical degradation but also the structural violence producing it. Nixon's "slow violence" is indispensable for understanding the temporality these practices counter: Edewor's sculptures make material the chemical corrosion occurring over decades; Ibie'ka ideographs encode environmental conditions normalized through gradual accretion; documentary films compress extended timelines of degradation into narratable form. Each modality functions as a temporal prosthesis bridging the gap between dispersed environmental harm and bounded human perception.

Research on indigenous video-making in Oaxaca, Mexico, reinforces these findings: visual media "reconfigure the production and evaluation of authoritative knowledge about indigenous peoples, places, and practices" (Smith, 2005). What emerges is a picture of Niger Delta visual art as a coherent, multi-modal system of environmental testimony, a *visual epistemology of environmental harm*

refusing both statistical abstractions and sentimental clichés. Sculpture addresses the problem of materiality, ideography addresses signification, and cinema addresses temporality. These practices do not merely document harm; they advance normative claims about the proper relationship between human communities and their environment, aligning with the SDG-centred frameworks that the next section examines.

Results II: Ecological Ethics, SDGs, and Environmental Management

Building on the aesthetic testimony documented above, this section interrogates the ecological-ethical frameworks and environmental management architectures that address, or fail to address the degradation those sculptures document. The analysis proceeds across three axes: the anthropocentrism–ecocentrism spectrum; SDG mapping onto Delta-specific crises; and practical management pathways for remediation.

Akpezi Edewor's (2021) ecological ethics framework posits that humanity's relationship with the biosphere oscillates along a continuum from anthropocentrism (nature possessing only instrumental value) to ecocentrism (ecosystems bearing intrinsic worth). Applied to the Niger Delta, this spectrum acquires acute analytical force. The region's environmental trajectory since 1958 has been governed overwhelmingly by anthropocentric logic: crude oil valued at over 600 billion USD in cumulative exports has been extracted with minimal regard for one of Africa's most biodiverse territories. Between 1976 and 1996, 4,835 oil spillages were recorded, with chemical constituents of flared gas deposited continuously onto vegetation, surface waters, and agricultural soils across an estimated 70,000 square kilometres (akpomuvie, 2011). This pattern exemplifies Hardin's "tragedy of the commons," yet Edewor's framework complicates the Hardinian model by foregrounding its ethical substructure: the tragedy is not merely resource mismanagement but a deeper normative failure, the systematic privileging

of anthropocentric valuation over ecocentric obligation.

The health consequences supply stark corroboration. Communities experience elevated exposure to hydrocarbon contaminants through ingestion of polluted water, consumption of bio-accumulated toxins, and inhalation of airborne particulate matter (Adekola et al., 2016). Acidic aerosols have altered rainfall chemistry and surface-water pH across substantial portions of the region (Nduka et al., 2016). These data render the ethical argument visceral: anthropocentric logic produces direct, measurable harm to the very populations it purports to serve.

The seventeen SDGs furnish the principal global architecture for reconciling development with environmental stewardship. Akpezi Edewor's treatise maps Goals 6 (Clean Water), 12 (Responsible Consumption), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land) as bearing particular salience for extractive-industry-driven degradation. Recent surveys in the Gbaramatu Kingdom and Soku oil fields have documented BTEX compounds in drinking-water sources substantially exceeding WHO guideline values (Ezekwe et al., 2022), placing SDG 6 at the epicentre. SDG 13 intersects through gas flaring — Nigeria historically among the world's top five flaring nations. SDGs 14 and 15 are threatened by degradation of the Delta's mangrove forests, approximately 8,500 square kilometres of critical coastal habitat, where oil toxicity has produced mortality rates exceeding 50% in heavily impacted zones (Ansah et al., 2022). The interconnected character of these targets reveals the systemic nature of the crisis.

Translating SDG frameworks into operational management requires governance architectures with specific attributes. Lebel et al. (2006) identify three decisive governance properties: participatory deliberation, polycentric institutional arrangements, and accountable authorities pursuing distributive justice. The Niger Delta's governance landscape has historically exhibited the inverse: decision-making concentrated in federal and corporate centres remote from

affected communities, weak accountability mechanisms, and a distribution of benefits and risks so asymmetrical that oil-producing communities rank among Nigeria's most impoverished (Akpomuvie, 2011).

Within this governance deficit, traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) represents latent resources for resilience-building. Ruiz-Mallén and Corbera (2013) demonstrate that TEK — expressed through local observational practices, customary institutions, and intergenerational knowledge transmission — enhances adaptive capacity where governance is self-regulated. The Niger Delta's indigenous communities possess generations of ecological knowledge regarding flood-pulse agriculture, mangrove fishery management, and soil-fertility cycling that predates petroleum extraction. Activating this knowledge within polycentric governance structures offers a pathway to SDG implementation grounded in local realities. Meanwhile, analysis of sustainability reporting among Nigerian banks reveals that environmental dimensions remain underprioritized relative to social dimensions (Michael, 2014), signalling a deficit in substantive corporate environmental accountability.

The hydric-soils study supplies concrete, data-driven evidence for an SDG-aligned management strategy. The research demonstrated that soils conventionally dismissed as agriculturally marginal waterlogged, seasonally inundated hydric soils occupying substantial portions of Delta State's wetlands, possess sufficient nutrient profiles, organic-matter content, and cation-exchange capacity to support productive agriculture. These findings challenge the land-degradation narrative positioning wetland conversion or abandonment as the only response, articulating instead a conservation-through-use paradigm: utilising existing hydric soils reduces pressure on upland forest ecosystems, simultaneously advancing food security (SDG 2), sustainable land management (SDG 15), and climate resilience (SDG 13). When read alongside the ecological-ethics framework, this evidence

exemplifies precisely the ecocentric reorientation advocated: valuing a landscape element according to its integrated ecological and productive functions rather than its immediate extractive potential.

In sum, the Niger Delta's environmental crisis is neither technically intractable nor informationally impoverished. It is a crisis of normative orientation and governance architecture, one in which ethical frameworks, sustainability goals, and remedial practices already exist but remain uncoupled from the institutional will necessary to operationalize them.

Discussion: Triangulation - Art, Ethics, and Science in Dialogue

This article has argued that any coherent response to the Niger Delta's environmental crisis must move beyond the disciplinary segregation partitioning visual art from ecological ethics and environmental management science. Triangulating Edewor's sculptural formalism, the SDG-anchored ecological ethics framework, and the hydric-soil empirical findings demonstrates that these three knowledge domains are constitutively interdependent. Visual art produces an aesthetic epistemology of degradation rendering "slow violence" sensorially legible (Ophori, 2024); ecological ethics supplies the normative vocabulary required to adjudicate competing claims on the environment; and environmental science furnishes the empirical substrate demonstrating that marginalised landscapes retain agricultural viability aligned with SDGs 12 and 15.

Art as Epistemic Intervention.

Edewor's sculptural practice performs a material mimesis of contamination: by welding salvaged petroleum pipes onto carved Ivri forms, the very substance of ecological violence intrudes upon the visual heritage of Delta communities. This gains its epistemic significance alongside the quantitative datasets dominating environmental discourse. Statistics are indispensable, yet they struggle to convey the phenomenological texture of living within a "sacrifice zone." The Ivri-pipe

synthesis becomes a visual index of what statistical tables cannot register: the entanglement of cultural identity with ecological collapse. Broader scholarship on Indigenous art as environmental advocacy from Kanaka Maoli art in Hawai'i (Tamaira, 2015) to Arctic video art (Dial-Kay, 2013, reinforces this argument. The Niger Delta case contributes a distinctive inflection: the artist incorporates material residues of damage directly into the aesthetic object, collapsing the distance between representation and referent.

Ecological Ethics as Normative Bridge.

Akpezi Edewor's spectrum from radical anthropocentrism to deep ecocentrism provides a diagnostic tool for evaluating ethical assumptions embedded in governance regimes. The prevailing management paradigm operates from uncompromising, narrowly economic anthropocentrism (Akpomuvie, 2011). The ecological ethics framework demonstrates that this posture is neither inevitable nor defensible. What the ethics axis contributes to triangulation is a normative vocabulary for adjudicating competing management strategies insisting that management decisions are irreducibly ethical decisions and that transparency about value commitments is a precondition for legitimate governance (Lebel et al., 2006).

Empirical Science as Grounding.

The hydric soils study transforms normative commitment to sustainable land use into technically actionable proposition. Without this empirical axis, the art–ethics dialogue risks abstraction: compelling moral arguments and powerful artistic testimonies, but no demonstrable pathway to alternative practice. The hydric soils data supply that pathway demonstrating that wetland ecosystems degraded by petroleum infrastructure are not wastelands but productive landscapes capable of supporting food security and ecosystem services.

The Management Triad.

The convergence of these three axes yields what we term the *management triad*; a governance heuristic in which art, ethics, and science function as mutually constitutive domains. Lebel et al.'s (2006) resilience governance framework maps productively onto the triad: participatory deliberation requires the epistemic resources that visual art provides; polycentric institutions demand the bridging function of the ethics axis; accountable authorities presuppose the empirical transparency that environmental science delivers. The Niger Delta's governance deficit is, viewed through this lens, a failure of epistemic integration of petroleum governance has systematically privileged technical, extractive expertise while marginalizing experiential community testimony and ethical interrogation of value frameworks.

The practical implications extend across three domains. First, environmental impact assessment processes should incorporate community-based artistic testimony and explicit ethical analysis alongside technical criteria. Second, interdisciplinary environmental education in Nigerian tertiary institutions should equip graduates to navigate artistic interventions and ethical frameworks as equally legitimate forms of environmental knowledge. Third, development practice must challenge the technocratic bias characterizing SDG-aligned programming, the SDGs are ethical commitments, yet their implementation is dominated by quantitative indicators. The art axis reminds practitioners that what is at stake is not merely measurable outcomes but the cultural and existential integrity of communities.

Limitations must be acknowledged: the visual analysis centres on a single artist; the documentary analysis relies on published texts; the secondary empirical analysis is constrained by the original dataset's scope. Future research should extend to painters, photographers, textile artists, and performers, complemented by empirical audience-reception studies and longitudinal soil remediation research. The management triad is offered not as a completed edifice but as a

conceptual scaffold inviting scholars, practitioners, and communities to construct, within its architecture, the integrated environmental knowledge the Niger Delta's predicament demands.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Niger Delta visual art constitutes a distinctive form of knowledge production. An aesthetic epistemology, complementing ecological ethics and environmental management science as a co-equal partner in framing sustainable responses to the region's crisis.

Three dimensions converge on a central finding: durable environmental stewardship requires integrating resources too often siloed into separate disciplinary domains. Nelson Edewor's "Modern Niger Delta Formalism", synthesising traditional Urhobo/ Isoko Ivri forms with petroleum pipes formalism, functions as visual testimony rendering legible the "slow violence" of petro-capitalist extraction through material mimesis of contamination. This testimonial function extends across modalities, the Ibie'ka ideographic system and documentary cinema, each engaging materiality, signification, and temporality in distinctive configurations. Alongside artistic testimony, the normative architecture supplied by Akpezi Edewor's ecological ethics framework mapping the anthropocentrism–ecocentrism spectrum onto SDG targets, furnishes the evaluative vocabulary governance institutions require. Empirical findings on the agricultural viability of marginalised hydric soils anchor this normative architecture in verifiable biophysical evidence, demonstrating conservation-through-use strategies that advance SDGs 12 and 15.

The triangulation of art, ethics, and science yields a management triad in which each component compensates for the limitations of the others: art supplies affective testimony and cultural memory; ethics furnishes normative vocabulary for evaluating trade-offs; and science anchors both in empirically verifiable reality. This triad extends Bennett et al.'s (2018) analytical framework for local

environmental stewardship by specifying the cultural and imaginative dimensions constitutive of effective stewardship.

Three imperatives emerge. First, systematic cataloguing and critical archiving of Niger Delta eco-artistic production is urgently needed, rendering this body of work accessible as a legitimate environmental knowledge resource. Second, participatory action research bringing artists, ethicists, and environmental scientists into collaborative engagement with Delta communities holds substantial promise for generating context-sensitive management interventions. Third, integrating environmental art into SDG-aligned cultural policy and educational curricula represents a pragmatic pathway for institutionalizing the management triad, ensuring that future generations inherit not only the technical tools of environmental management but also the imaginative resources — the capacity to visualize ecological alternatives that sustainable stewardship demands.

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