

# REDEFINING AN INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL PARADIGM: AFRICA-ART AND CULTURE - IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

All issues in the developing world including Africa are tailored to Western modalities. Specifically, the problem of Environmental sustainability/protectionism has been recurrently prosecuted by global development paradigms that are cut-off from the critical nourishment of our Africaness. Besides the fact that such paradigms have remained fruitless in our historical experience, western technologies have also proven to be inappropriate when wholly applied to the African situation. The stubborn insistence on the application of 'global' (but foreign) environmental and development paradigms in our peculiar circumstance, even where results are lacking, smacks of Nigerian (African) policy makers' insincerity and renders the efforts of the international community questionable. This paper explores African culture and artistic traditions as a context for redefining an indigenous paradigm for prosecuting environmental sustainability.

**KEYWORDS:** Environment, African Culture, Art, Sustainability.

It is certainly not new to declare that colonialism and imperialism left a stubborn rot in the African entity, the Nigerian sub-culture, and in all other Third World societies. What might be fresh is to foster ways of de-emphasising the distracting impacts of a long gone era and to define new and sustainable modalities for confronting developmental issues of contemporary times and spaces. It is quite obvious that, while former colonies seemingly defy colonialism by focussing on its impacts, policy formulation and production and consumption patterns are wilfully tailored to foreign/global (Western?) ideals. These ideals are by no means negative in themselves. But by their transplanting to a contrary social-economy and their application well beyond the local economic and cultural capacity to sustain, it has been near impossible to evidence genuine dividends in terms of development in Africa. The continent's economies have thus continued to degenerate in unsustainable terms. It is specifically because of this degenerate social economy in the continent's democracies that Africa Leadership Forum (2001) declares that, "self-rule and sovereign nationhood is turning out to be a monumental disaster" (7). Therefore in all facets of our indigenous life, the inevitable is to delineate our own workable (and therefore sustainable) paradigms to "address the structured and interpretative understanding of the emerging constellation of global forces" and their implications for our society (Machungo This Earth 4).

This is a social anthropological study. It is limited to the cultural aspects of environmental protection and is not concerned with the physical anthropology of the African environment. The aim of the paper is to show that African art and cultural capacities have been traditionally attentive to the question of environmental protection. And, that the vital limitation to these traditional and cultural models is the fact that they have been misinterpreted and dismissed as 'fetish' by the former colonial machinery and the western castes of mind, which operate contemporary development paradigms in Africa. The environment has become one of the most dialogued issues of concern to global intelligentsia. Specifically, sustainability of environmental resource use, the cessation of human activities that deplete/degenerate the environment and the reversal of the effects of human abuse on the environment, have remained critical trajectories of international discourses that propound paradigms of sustainable development. Also, financial commitments in very huge sums are diffused to the 'developing' world through the funding of multinational networks of NGOs with any of the environmental focuses. And although the application of these evolved environmental

paradigms have witnessed significant changes in the West, the developing world - Africa for instance - is still to accrue dividends. What we intend to do in this article is to (1) define culture as the most fundamental ingredient of sustainable development and (2) redefine African culture and artistic traditions as critical foundations upon which sustainable environmental development paradigms can be evolved to re-establish continuities with indigenous African environment. This study is not purposed to articulate an alternative and all encompassing theory, but to point out the serious anomaly, which resolution has the potential for achieving sustainable environmental protection where imported paradigms have failed. This paper is therefore a pointer to the need for Africa and her development partners to look inwards of the continent's culture for the delineation of sustainable environmental development/protection paradigms that will fit the African dispensation.

Culture, itself, is a tool of self-definition and self development - the fragmentation of which holistically vitalizes 'racial/national will' in ever-increasing terms (Soyinka 1982). What this means is that, culture being more than how a people order their lives (for it is the essence of life itself), posits as the tenuous divide between progress and stasis, between peace and chaos, and between regeneration and degeneration. Culture is definitely the primordial cauldron from which a people filter-out what constitutes their life and living. It therefore means that culture is paradoxically strong in defining peoples while weakening them progressively in the face of sustained antagonism or attrition. At some hypothetical point in the process the precarious thread snaps and the people loose both their being and their sense of being. It is no wonder the commencement of resistance by a repressed people is linked to their art and media, manifested in various forms (Soyinka 1982), and which also give direction to their will to survive. This fact was witnessed in South Africa where resistance commenced with say drama, which would change to song or dance under the watchful eyes of the Apartheid oppressor. Sustainable development in individual cultural localities needs be wrought in an atmosphere free from the intrusion of our much more aggressive, evaluative and creative impulses, while setting aside pre-packaged views in the search for the premises and the logic that every society builds for itself (Gross 1974; Seiber 1977). This premise for developing the local from indigenous knowledge must be recognised by the global as surer and more sustainable than the top-down approach of wholesale transplanting of 'sacrosanct' global (but western) paradigms.

Africa continues to oscillate in one moment of developmental time because of the failure to understand that sustainability in the environment can be achieved only through the medium of cultural development. UNEP et al (1991) asserts that the concept of socio-cultural sustainability seeks the maintenance of stability between social and cultural systems, while reducing destructive conflicts. In other words, environmental sustainability would continue to elude us if we don't approach the issues from the standpoint of our African cultural ingenuity - building upon, and seeking ways to improve the vast traditional legacies of past millennia. Whereas culture is dynamic (it does change), cultural dynamism cannot be equated to cultural attrition or acculturation. In matters of the environment and sustainable development in Nigeria and indeed in Africa, we must not fail to appreciate the serious divergences between the western approach and the African system of thought. The divergence will neither be found in Western dialectic encyclopaedia, nor in oral African philosophies, but in the western consciousness. In *Drama and the African Worldview*, Soyinka (1976) is clear that the divergence between the European and African worldviews will more accurately be found in a typical western mind, which compartmentalizes thoughts, observations, spiritual and empirical deductions and turns these into disparate truths that are sustained by a dialectic backbone of idiomatic and analytical presentation modes. The difference is between one culture that irreducibly and cohesively understands truths and another whose creativity is separatist and compartmentalized.

The African sees himself in constant unity and harmony with his entire environment and the far more important cosmic realities. All time -past, present and future are one; all existence and activity physical and spiritual, religious and secular are one neat whole in his reality. Therefore it is difficult to construe the environment - its protection and conservation - with disregard to the African system of thought. This understanding should serve as a framework and a platform for evolving any environmental protection and developmental paradigms for Africa. For sustainability in environment and natural resource use can be better achieved when located within the larger framework of continuations with the African concept of environment.

Furthermore Nigerian Government's inability, for instance, to understand and appreciate this fact, is the reason why the entire country is overburdened with failed and abandoned projects. Often times, government officials and petite bourgeoisie elements, together with prevailing dictatorships, insist on applying imported concepts to gain personal gratification. These concepts and technologies are always out of cultural context and as such irrelevant and counter-productive. Selfish policy makers often seek extrinsic mega-solutions from the eager civilized Western world. In *The Needs of African Agriculture*, Mpooyo (1989) mentions that

A prime example is the recent US\$40 million Nigerian rice project undertaken by the Hester Corporation of Mississippi and the Government of Cross River State. The contract provided that at least 1,000 hectares of rice would be cultivated in 1961 growing to...4000 hectares in five years... This rice was to be cultivated using the American system of airplane cultivation in which, after the ground is prepared, airplanes are used to seed...It will be no surprise that these harvests of rice have not yet filled the warehouses of Nigeria. This is a paradigm case of inappropriate technology. Being introduced on a scale beyond the capabilities of the local economic, social and political authorities to perform. (158)

Except for the purposes of self-gratification, why else could government insist on airplane cultivation rather than empower the local rice farmers with resources to increase their own production capacities? This smacks of gross insincerity on the part of Nigerian policy makers who insist upon applying wholesale western techniques that have no history of appreciable success in our development contexts. The application of inappropriate technology and paradigms is the most fundamental reason why national development has become a painfully impossible achievement in the whole of Africa. Without the initial platform of local and traditional know-how, the basis for viable environmental development is maligned, and the culture also of environmental protection and conservation is negated. Ifezue's *Environmental Pollution* (1996) says, as environmentalists have correctly pointed out, that the complications of our crowded and technological society pressures us often to choose between unpleasant alternatives, as decisions in favour of environmental conservation controls do conflict with other equally vital objectives. In contrast with traditional African paradigms of environmental conservation, the abusive consequence of the complicated onslaught from our out-of-context technological acquisition renders the environment rather unsafe. Aguguo writes that some of these negativities (fuelled by greed) have both rendered our environment unsafe and provided the basis for the proliferation today of several diseases that infest our society. Besides successive military governments in Nigeria's history did not appreciate these issues. Overly engrossed in "security" and related matters, they've left our environment at the mercy of selfish national/multinational business organizations. Aguguo again identifies that business organizations engaging in environmental abuse in Nigeria do so for selfish objectives and the problem includes the abuse of air, water or land or a combination. Readily we recall the Koko toxic waste saga of 1988, and the myriad of oil and chemical related pollution of the Nigerian coastal settlements in which countless souls have been lost in the battle for the environment. None of the affected organizations or indeed the international community has acted with anything but hypocrisy and insincerity. At best they gathered in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 with a shameful show of pomp. Linden (1997) laments that the international community's response is hypocritical, as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, for example, which brought leaders of 178 nations together did not translate rhetoric into action. On the local front the environmental problems of rapid urbanisation have continued to perplex government as wildlife extinction, forest degradation and uncontrolled environmental pollution by human and industrial waste, continues to render Nigerian urban centres unsafe for metropolitan dwellers. In all of this, a great number of Nigerian and other African NGOs have profited from Western funds aimed at propagating better and more sustainable attitudes to the environment. But these NGOs miss most important point when it comes to the question of sustainability in the application of development paradigms. They get funds from Europe and proceed to apply whole-sale imported paradigms that alienate the African cultural contexts. No wonder failure is evidenced in many communities where western paradigms of development have been wholly applied to donor-sponsored projects. There is therefore a great need for shifts from the failure of orthodox development efforts (Leal, 1999). And African artistic and cultural traditions can provide the sustainable bases for such shifts.

#### Some Global Paradigms of Environmental Development

Among the growing list of paradigms of environmental development are RRA, PRA, PALM, REFLECT, GIS, PLA, etc, which have been applied to various post-colonial African contexts. Regardless of the financial and human resources expended in planned environmental interventions in African

communities, each of these paradigms has had limitations that have espoused some level of failure in target communities.

#### Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

RRA methods supposedly have greater speed than conventional analytic methods in that they involve working in the 'field,' emphasise learning directly from indigenous people; and emphasise flexible hypothesis rather than fixed recommendations (Conway, 1988). But a better and more participatory approach to intervention should include time, sensitivity, and openness, which eliminates misconception and suspicions by allowing genuine two-way information-flow between the local society and the bringers of intervention (McCracken, 1989).

#### Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

This methodology evolved to effect more participation by using marginal local resource persons. It worked from the premise that local people could gather more accurate information than outsiders (Mascarenhas, 1991; Fernandez, Mascarenhas and Ramachandran, 1991). In the course of field application, it was concluded that 'Rapid' couldn't be 'Participatory', hence PALM (Participatory Learning Methods) evolved. PALM emphasises the participation of the rural people in their own development, and positions external presence in rural settlements as 'catalyst' and 'partner' rather than as 'patron' and 'benefactor' (Mascarenhas, 1991). Aside from doubts about whether PRA/PALM can be effective in establishing fresh entry points in planned environmental interventions, field experiences show the strategies' limitations in soliciting adequate representation/participation of marginalized groups like women and other minorities (Fernandez, Mascarenhas and Ramachandran, 1991).

#### REFLECT

This terminology means "Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques." The Mother Manual of REFLECT was produced in 1995 and published in 1996. It was based on consolidated learning from 3 pilot programmes in Uganda, Bangladesh, and El Salvador (Archer, 1998). It was perceived as capable of promoting sustained community dialogue and integrating indigenous and traditional knowledge systems with the learning of literacy, and the recruitment of local facilitators (Phnuyal, Archer and Cottingham, 1998). It became outdated as concerns were about the manual's bulk, layout/design, and the fact that it had the potential of being mechanically applied by trainers to exert their expertise and power over the local people. Field experience has shown that the best REFLECT efforts have been those that actually ignored it (Archer, 1998).

#### Geographic Information Systems GIS

GIS is applied for mapping socio-economic indicators "indicators of development" in district studies and spatial analysis for such applications as natural resource management and planning. It now refers to computer-based technologies that allow the overlaying of thematic layers of spatial information, such as population densities and forest distribution (Jordan and Shretha, 2000). GIS is considered to disempower local people by putting technology before them. The local people are unaware of 'social indicators' and communities needs/requirements are not identified or reflected in the process of information gathering.

#### Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)

PLA is an umbrella term, subsuming a host of contemporary participatory approaches applied globally to planned environmental interventions. Some of these include Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Technology

Development (PTD), Theatre for Development, Méthod Active de Reséarch et de Planification Participative (MARP) etc. PLA evolved not just out of the need for full participation of target populations in the processes of identifying their needs and potentials, but also to replace the failure of conventional development approaches with creative and interactive alternative methodologies. PLA challenges preconceptions and prevailing biases about indigenous people's knowledge, and instead institute shared knowledge, interactive learning and flexible but structured analysis, which have proved to be requisite for sustainability of development. The methods involved include group work, field-based visualisation, to interviewing, and presents viable opportunities for "mobilising local people for joint action" (PLA Notes CD-ROM, 99).

Gill (1993) has been able to show the cultural bias of some "participatory" techniques in environmental development in non-western societies. Gill's field research particularly links 'pie-charts' to western culture where siblings, from early ages, learned to gauge and compare relative sizes of pies (cut radially) before making choices. But, the study proves that people in rural non-western societies scarcely have "pie or cake-like" objects forming parts of traditional diets, at least not the kind that is cut into "wedge-shaped servings". Gill's study is conclusive that, rural interventions "have to come up with a method of measurement that is both indigenous, and therefore more easily grasped, and more precise" than purely western forms. This conclusion is very apt in the context of environmental development in African societies. This underscores the vital need to locate and adopt communication and quantification strategies that not only enlist the participation of local African people, but also appropriates visual methods of measurement, analogous to African traditional art and cultural systems of thought. Cognisance of the foregoing, Ajibade and Omini (2002) have understood participation and local content in environmental development as a political process. The authors analyze western communication paradigms to show that some contemporary environmental intervention methodologies have imbibed the concept of local content and participation in very slight degrees. The authors conclude that the success attending each method is directly proportional to the level of intrinsic participation of the local art and cultural capacity. Ajibade and Omini (2002) for instance propose the "yam-chart" (see fig.1) in place of pie-charts for use in African environmental development contexts. The authors provide the following justification for their proposal: (1) the pie-chart's failure with non-western rural people; (2) the basic shape of the yam tuber is analogous to several items of food in African systems; (3) the yam-chart's lateral cuts reflect traditional slicing methods and African people will better be able to compare and gauge relative sizes. Ira (2000) has established that culturally intrinsic graphics and visual communication aids are concrete and mutually understandable anchor for reducing ambiguities or confusion originating from typically western oral communication alone.

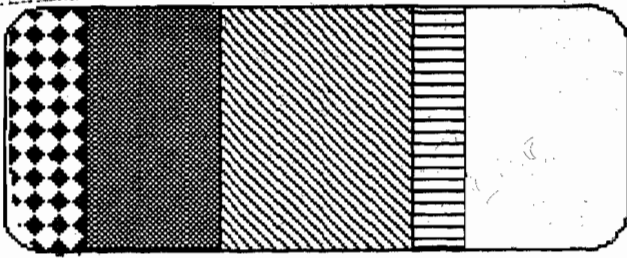


Fig. 1: The Yam-chart. Its shape and segmentation are analogous to traditional African methods of slicing yam and other tubers. The yam-chart signifies a more African and culturally relevant device than the pie-chart. It is therefore prone to better successes, when in the context of African environmental intervention and development.

#### Defining the Indigenous African Environmental Protection Paradigm

It has been declared that projects that build from local knowledge are the surest way to achieve technical change (Blackwell/Goodwillie/Webb 1991). The Nigerian experience is a sure validation of this. For instance we do know that zoological gardens and protected forest/waters have prospered exceedingly in Europe, America and other parts of the west. But in Nigeria as well as other parts of Africa, attempts at establishing mirror conservation institutions have met with perplexing failure. Like several others across the nation, the zoos in Benin and Calabar for example are now redundant pieces of wasteland. The reason for this is simple to construe. The contemporary zoo is tailored not along African lines, but towards western ideals. Thus the local cultural capacity itself antagonizes these efforts because of inherent inconsistencies and radical discontinuities with traditional environmental conservation paradigms.

Traditional African environmental conservation methods have historically achieved successes and maintained ecological balance over the millennia. Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria for example there is a tradition of sacred groves and forests i.e.:

<i>Igbo Oba</i> ,	-	The King's forest
<i>Igbo irun'male</i>	-	Grove of the four hundred divinities
<i>Igbo a'iwo</i>	-	The forbidden forest

The Yoruba of all walks traditionally respected these protected forest reserves and groves including the wildlife they contained. This stilled extinction. In Biase local Government of Cross River State, it is forbidden to fish in the river Udiabai. We may recall also the annual Argungu fishing and cultural festival in the River Rrima. It is important to note that tradition forbids fishing in that particular river except, of course, on festival days. Though the Sarkin Ruwa, the priest as a traditional conservation expert performs the river rituals three months before the festival, this 'ritual' is really an aquatic survey of species aimed at preventing over-exploitation. In many parts of Africa traditional taboos and cultural laws protect several species of plants and animals. Royal edicts and cultic laws in the whole of Africa thus achieved a healthy balance in the ecosystem. And, the protection of these sacred groves, forests and rivers as well as the flora and fauna within them was ensured. It was easy for individual citizens to respond to the taboos and traditional laws regulating the use of forest and animal reserves, including the senseless harnessing of crucial water and aquatic resources. Children grew up to learn and respect these traditions. And as they established families, they pass the knowledge on to their own children. That is how

Africans have maintained ecosystem balances. Now it really doesn't matter if, at the initial point of contacts, the 'civilized' west found our methods and techniques too fetish. All we required and what we achieved was a safe environment protected from degradation, and greedy and abusive use. What obtains today is a profusion of forest reserves tailored to western patterns where certain animals are not to be hunted. At the end we now have several of these 'protected' animals facing extinction (imported western environmental paradigms having failed extensively). It is imperative that non-western peoples of the world begin to evolve viable local patterns to suit their own cultural needs. This calls for important grassroots education and re-education. In Nigeria's *Threatened Environment* (1991), NEST asserts the need to educate people, mainly at the grassroots level, to take up responsibility for wisely nurturing and utilizing our environmental resources and taking urgent steps to restore balance wherever imbalance has been experienced.

As obtainable in many other non-western cultures, the environment is sacred, delicate and inseparable from man in the African view of things. In all these lands, there have been conscious traditional and communal efforts at safeguarding and protecting every aspect of the sacred environment from senseless over-exploitation and vandalism. And, over countless millennia crucial balances had been maintained between man, exploitation, and sustainability. Thus in the African sense the environment is both a part of, and a member of our community. Man protects his environment as he protects himself and his community. Any individual in traditional society that went against ordinances of sacred groves was a communal threat and all upheld this sense of responsibility. And, until the global world begins to respect these old local cultural values for responsibly managing and perceiving the environment as part of the human 'community', the earth will continue to degenerate from abuses and overexploitation. In *Respect for the Land* (1997), Gore declares that our focus is overly tangible in environmental considerations. He writes that the environment is about our intangible sense of community and our conservation obligations for preventing 'resources that took millions of years to develop' from damage and depletion in 'a matter of decades'. Gore is definite that our challenge is to find new ways to address those problems by reaching back to our oldest values of community and responsibility by inspiring a greater respect for the land and the resources we share. By treating our planet as a community, we can save our natural riches for future generations. Gore has hit on a basic truth: that the safety of our environment does not lie in the sophisticated complications of tangible technological societies. Every culture must reach back to its own sustainable cultural values to tackle all manner of issues. For such values that are traditional to particular societies, are the surest ways to maintain stability in human efforts. Traditional western patterns that are successful in application to western situations may not necessarily meet with success when applied to non-western situations. We must remember that western man evolved his development paradigms from his 'western' experience and traditions, which fact is the basis for the larger chunk of successes he achieves in his own environment. Incidentally our inability to resort to our own traditional paradigmatic modes, preferring instead to apply imported techniques, is the reason why we are not able to achieve successes in the sustainability of any aspect of our development. It is also the reason why failed and failing projects deface our economy.

Indeed the situation now is a critical one. While the international community is making shallow treaties, African leaders are busy succeeding themselves in the quest for primitive wealth. Thus the situation has worsened. In fact, of the 25 countries listed as having the least access to safe

water, the U. N. Environmental Program says 19 are in Africa. European multilateral NGOs have continued to publish disheartening figures about the African condition. But these are not backed-up with anything more than hypocritical tokenism. And this is not the first time we've come face to face with western dialectic hypocrisy. Aside from the fact that nothing of enduring value came to Africa from centuries of slavery, we recall too, the Eurocentric rhetoric meted out to African arts and culture under the open cheque of bringing God's own salvation. The missionary colonizers of the arrogant 'popish' and Protestant varieties saw fit to call us heathens and the products of our artistic genius were idols fit only for burn fires. It is no surprise today that the best of our idols have been idolized in European homes and institutions. Now, it doesn't matter if the punitive expedition to Benin in 1897 or elsewhere did not yield enough idols to go round Europe. The important thing is that, we now know that not everything European is good either for Africans or for the development of African environments.

## CONCLUSION

### The Imperative

From the preceding discussions is inferable that our environment needs our critical attention to survive the abusive onslaught from the increasingly western urban cultural activities. What is very clear in the discourse so far is the very fact that western paradigms of environmental protection and sustainable development have achieved no appreciable dividends after decades of application to African contexts. That being the case it is now imperative that we - our policy makers - begin to re-strategise and to forestall the complete collapse of our environment. The imperative strategy, which promises to be more sustainable, is to appropriate and substitute the abandoned African traditional environmental protection paradigms for the static, less practicable and failed western forms. What this means is that we shall have to resuscitate such traditions wherever they might have been and to empower them through legislation and communal will. At certain instances the African paradigm may completely replace western forms, while at others, there may be the need for revitalising the traditional with western ingredients. Thus we have a serious cultural task at hand, if our environment and indeed we ourselves must survive. This is not a call for the move towards puritism, since we cannot re-invent the wheel but put it to new uses. Rather it is the call for experimenting to contemporalise and revitalise the African tradition to attain humane levels of sustainability in developments across the continent. What we need to do and what we must do is to jettison the slavish application of western paradigms in all facets of our economy and to map out fresh basis for a new modernity for African. This task is cultural and demands a premeditated syncretic process, which emphasizes invaluable continuities with the pre-colonial culture and traditions of Africa and synthesises prudently imported contributions from other cultures (Chinweizu et al 1980). It is the prime destiny of the artists (visual or performing) who are the closest, by vocation and profession, to culture to foster the development of our artistry and traditions. This can be prosecuted at several levels including the following:

1. Scholars and environmental developers should adopt the yam-chat against the pie-chat in African intervention projects and researches. Scholars should also continue to explore African art and culture for other visual and quantitative possibilities.
2. Then too, environmental scientists engaged in development and interventions have the responsibility to reach out to

traditional African art and cultural capacities to formulate paradigms that are contiguous with Africa. Perhaps too, it might then be fruitful to reappraise current environmental paradigms for the purpose of grafting their positive sides to workable African cultural frameworks.

3. The mounting of art exhibitions at our various constituencies to sensitise the public on the goodness of our African traditions and the need for us to revamp positive aspects that have the potential for regenerating and protecting our environment.
4. To form art and cultural pressure groups at all levels of government local, state, national and international to press for the acknowledgment of the importance of African traditions to Africans and the need for such crucial traditions to be grafted into current environmental legislations. This is not merely to ensure the African environment alone but to establish the point that other non-western peoples too require the move towards indigenous paradigmatic shifts in development.
5. At the classroom and lecture-hall levels artists in the academia need also to enlighten and sensitise students in this enculturation effort so that they too shall move into the labour market well aware of the importance of re-establishing cultural continuities in the discourse and practice of environmental management, conservation and development.
6. Radio and TV programmes and talk shows are also critical mediums that artists can explore for this culturing project. Such programmes could host insightful artists in question-and-answer sessions or in phone-in activities where audiences can participate in the discourse for wider popularisation of the imperative concepts.
7. Radio and TV dramas or serials can be scripted for production/airing to the benefit of the Nigerian people. Such dramas are particularly useful in this circumstance since they can deliver messages directly into homes to correlate other efforts and contribute to the agenda setting for the contemporalisation of useful traditional conservation paradigms, with the aim of evolving sustainable substitutes to failed and failing western concepts.
8. Outdoor media such as billboards, posters, handbills and printed T-shirts carrying simple messages can also be utilised for critical results. Additionally messages could be in the many local dialects to benefit both the illiterate and the people in the rural hinterlands.

This list is by no means exhaustive as there are undoubtedly many other ways the Nigerian (African) artist or environmental scientist can contribute effectively to the issues of conservation and development. What should be paramount in our minds is that the practice in global educational and development sectors has been very imposing on non-western peoples. At the end of the day whole generations were alienated "from their cultural roots". In *Identity Crisis* (2003), Trapnell writes that people were "taught everything from a western worldview, but were actually acquiring very little knowledge" (11). Cognisance of these critical issues, Amazonian indigenes for instance initiated the Intercultural Bilingual Education Teacher Training Programme (FORMABIAP), to promote alternative teaching methods based on the recognition of indigenous people's rights and know-how. The aim of the project was to educate and foster the awareness and respect for indigenous

culture to avoid "sidelining the rich heritage of the indigenous people and uprooting their identity." Trapnell writes that after 15 years of this experiment people have learnt for themselves the great value of their own traditional ways, as "a new generation is emerging better able to protect and manage their ancestral lands" (11). On our side of things, we in Nigeria and other parts of Africa need urgently to foster the emergence of such a new generation by re-establishing and re-affirming the positivities of our traditional environmental protection/conservation methods. Thus the art and cultural practises that foster sustainable environments should be reawakened within a shared public sphere and fine-tuned as paradigms to replace (partially or completely where applicable) failed and failing western alternatives. As Enwezor et al have suggested, it is important to create a "common public sphere" that is culturally African in framework and also maintains vital continuities with vital indigenous "intellectual traditions" (11). The evolution of this alternative approach to the African environment is an enduring means of safeguarding and conserving our environment in a sustainable way. By this single act, we safeguard not just our planet, but also our very generation, our very lives, and those of our children.

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