

Suzanne Preston Blier

Reading the African Landscape

My paper will provide an overview of what we know (or think we know) about African landscape, and how we have come to learn this. I will address both ancient exemplars (framed in part around archaeological evidence) as well as later pre-colonial works as described in texts collected in later nineteenth and twentieth century through travel narratives and ethnographic writings. In the course of this paper I also will present a brief typology of landscape interventions: these ranging from rock arts to earthworks to grove shrines to urban forms looking at both complements across the continent and contexts of difference.

Lazare Elondou

African Cultural landscapes: meaning for communities and values for World Heritage

African World Heritage sites are diverse although underrepresented on the UNESCO World Heritage List. There are presently 86 World heritage sites located in 32 countries. Among these sites, 47 are cultural properties with some of them being considered as cultural landscapes as they bear exceptional cultural traditions or spectacular settings of traditional human settlements, land use, and associated with events, living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs. Sukur (Nigeria), Koutammakou (Togo), Bassari (Senegal), Mapungubwe and Richtersveld (South Africa), Mijikenda Forests (Kenya), and Konso (Ethiopia) are some of the most representatives sites. The presentation will provide an overview of the UNESCO World Heritage program's perspective on their protection, especially through the understanding of their outstanding universal values, as well as their meaning to communities that are their main custodians. Their intangible aspects which are at the heart of sustainable conservation strategies will be analyzed in the perspective of addressing current thinking on the role of heritage conservation in economic and social development in Africa. The presentation will be an opportunity to share the importance of traditional management systems in the sustainable conservation of African cultural landscape. It will also explain why these sites remain fragile in the faces of development pressures and conflict situations.

Joost Fontein

Rain, power, sovereignty and the materiality of signs in southern Zimbabwe

In 2010 a government meteorologist revealed that for much of the last decade, the Zimbabwean weather forecast had been censored on a daily basis by agents of the President's Office. 'This information' he said 'was seen as sensitive'. What this 'sensitivity' amounts to is the subject of this paper. It is hard to make sense of the government's impulse to censor the weather forecast in the 2000s without reference to the localized re-configurations of authority over land and 're-making' of the state that *fast track* land reform provoked. To the extent that *fast track* offered new opportunities for the realization of a diversity of localised aspirations and imagined futures that turned on access to land and

fertile soils in divergent ways, the recurrent droughts and failing harvests of the early 2000s were politically significant because they called into question the legitimacy of land reform, and the broader 'third *chimurenga*' project constituted around it. But across Zimbabwe, and the region, rainfall and drought have long been measures of contested political legitimacy in more complex ways not limited to the politics of food, famine and agricultural production. In southern Zimbabwe, this is true not just for spirit mediums, chiefs and other 'traditionalist' authorities for whom rainmaking practices are well-established means of demonstrating 'autochthony', sovereignty and legitimacy, but also for war veterans, new farmers, government technocrats and others involved in land reform during the 2000s. This is what I examine here. Whilst I focus particularly on rainmaking practices, encounters with *njuzu* water spirits, and national *biras* that took place in the 2005-6 when research was carried out, the larger point I pursue is that water acts as an *index of power* – of the entangled but contested play of legitimacy and sovereignty - across many different registers of meaning and regimes of rule. In making this argument I engage with Keane (2003; 2005) and Engelke's elaboration of Peirce's theory of signs (1955), and build upon others (James 1972; Jedrej 1992) who have long argued that rainmaking 'traditions' across eastern, central and southern Africa are less a form of applied meteorology and more an idiom of politics and power, in order to argue that they are necessarily *both* at the same time.

Jeremy Foster

From Table Mountain to Hoerikwaggo: creolizing Africa's "first landscape"?

Although it is generally accepted that the construct of 'landscape' is an integral part of the human occupation of, and investment of meaning in, a given territory, there is less agreement about how this mapping of cultural values onto material terrains occurs. This uncertainty is reflected in tensions between the idea of landscape as a cultural, primarily visual and spatial, projection or image (ie 'landskip'), and landscape as a sedimentation of everyday social practices, customs and negotiations (ie 'landschaft'). Because the former is seen to exemplify the empowered 'gaze' that distances, objectifies, and attempts to control people or territory perceived to be in some way 'other', it is often equated with European modernity and conquest. Thus, it is argued, any landscape that emerges as a primarily visual 'scape' from which observer stands back, themselves unobserved, is fundamentally 'colonial'. In this paper, I want to explore recent efforts to recuperate as 'African' a cultural landscape that has for centuries been a powerful projection of the Western imagination. Table Mountain could, in fact, be called Africa's 'first landscape'. Even before 16th C Portuguese explorers had set foot on land, they had, viewing the Mountain from offshore, given it a tragic identity as Adamastor, the mythical figure of Camoens's epic poem, *The Lusiads*. Because colonization of the whole sub-continent was launched from its base, Table Mountain not only became a highly familiar landmark and symbol of European settlement, it also became a terrain onto which numerous discourses – symbolic, scientific, technological and environmental – were projected over the next 350 years. This took a new turn in 1998, when over 70% of the Cape Peninsula was declared a National Park as part of a larger process of expressing South Africa's new-found democratic identity to the world, and initiatives were launched to characterize Table Mountain as an indigenous landscape: 'Hoerikwaggo'. Although I will sketch some of the historic symbolic mobilizations of views *of* and *from* Table Mountain, my main focus will be on the

less obvious, but equally multiple, networks of pragmatic use that have socially, politically and economically embedded the massif in the everyday life of the surrounding city. Focusing on the past twenty years of political transition, I will tease out how the Mountain's highly varied terrains – many the product of its history -- have been used as places of identity by local residents of different classes and races, in the guise of workers, scientists, administrators, recreationists and amateur botanists. I will juxtapose this emerging 'landschaft' with the increasingly visible, marketed Table Mountain as an iconic 'landskip' of global tourism, and explore how operational, management, design and marketing strategies developed by the TMNP have attempted to navigate tensions between these two cultural conditions. My intention is to explore the gap between official and unofficial memory, and how post-colonial landscapes become entangled with the colonial and pre-colonial. By problematizing notions of 'indigenous knowledge', I hope to demonstrate how Table Mountain has over the last 2 decades been not so much Africanized as creolized, a collective space fashioned and contested through a combination of imaginative, representational and material practices. By adopting what cultural geographers call a 'dwelling' perspective, I hope to show how Table Mountain has become, simultaneously an assemblage of material and cultural practices, a geographical space of representation, and an ideologically charged medium of discourse -- thus, perhaps, no longer a 'landscape'?

Grey Gundaker

Design on the World: Blackness and the Absence of Sub-Saharan Africa from the History of Garden and Landscape Design

Garden and designed landscape studies is a broad interdisciplinary field encompassing much of the world, past and present. Yet landscapes designed by and for Black Sub-Saharan Africans have been, and still are, excluded from comprehensive histories of landscape architecture and from the field as a whole. Indeed, for almost three hundred years black Africans and descendants in the Diaspora have comprised a comparative baseline that continues to underwrite the value ascribed to the landscapes in the European tradition and those of significant Others. In order to end this situation and reframe the history of landscape design, we need to know about Sub-Saharan landscapes on their own terms—information our other speakers are taking the first step in providing. However, we also need to understand how it arose and why it endures, long after massive revisionism across the academy. This paper explores this question by tracing key premises through influential texts from the last third of the twentieth century to the present.

Charlotte Joy

Cultural Landscapes in Mali: Historic antecedents and future trajectories

UNESCO's recognition of cultural landscapes in Mali has been intimately linked with the nationalist agendas of successive post-Independence governments. The site of 'The Old Towns of Djenné' (and the surrounding archaeological sites) was declared a World Heritage site in 1988 by UNESCO, together with Timbuktu (1988) and the Cliff of Bandiagara: Land of the Dogons (1989). The archaeological sites

surrounding Djenné (most notably *Djenné-Djeno*) have attracted global fame due to the excavations by the American MacIntosh team in the 1970s. The excavations findings were put to rhetorical use by the ex-President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré (himself an archaeologist) - who argued that they showed a 'heterarchical' past for Mali and therefore pointed to a democratic future. The excavations also negated an Islamic Diffusionist model of culture in sub-Saharan Africa which had held sway for a long time. The town of Djenné itself is important architecturally - as a unique example of a town built entirely in mud-brick, with its Mosque being the biggest mud-brick building in the world. However, due to climatic and economic conditions (and most recently, the political turmoil) the cost of upkeep of the houses has become prohibitive for many in Djenné and the assumed intimate link between architecture and landscape has been brought into question.

Paul Lane

Archaeologies of East African Pastoralist Landscapes: Places and Paths of Memory

There have been remarkably few archaeological studies that have taken a landscape perspective toward the study of African pastoralist societies, and especially one which takes the notion of 'path' rather than 'place' as being the guiding metaphor through which ancient pastoralist societies related to, and understood, the world around them. Instead, the concern with making pastoralist settlements more visible as 'places' so that they can be subjected to the archaeologist's gaze, may have helped divert attention away from the very characteristics of these societies, namely an emphasis on mobility and transience, that actually distinguish them, ontologically, from more sedentary populations. This paper aims to address this gap through a consideration of pastoralist practices in East Africa from their initial appearance some 4000-4500 years ago until c. 1800 CE, so as to develop a better understanding of the changing significance of place and path within different pastoralist societies over this time period. Rather than simply reproducing a conventional narrative of the evolution of pastoralism in the region, the paper will focus instead on discussing how it is possible, in principle, to reconstruct mobility patterns and paths from archaeological data and how archaeologists currently approach the study of memory in past societies. The concepts will be illustrated with reference to preliminary results from ongoing research being undertaken on the Laikipia and Loroghi Plateaus, Kenya, and the insights these might provide into indigenous pastoralist understandings of place and path.

Neil Norman

Royal African Formal Gardens: Geomancy, Politics, and Trees among the Eighteenth Century Gbe Kingdoms of West Africa

The intersection of trees and West Africa political process is longstanding and well-documented. Oral traditions and traveler's accounts describe "Palaver" trees shading debates that range from family disputes to the choice of kings. These same sources suggest that sacred forests anchor memories of ancestral figures, military victories, and cosmological action to points on the landscape. Nonetheless, until relatively recently scholars have described such trees as elements of the "natural" landscape that

were later inscribed with meaning. This paper builds on recent attempts to document anthropogenic landscapes in which elite Africans manipulated plants in order to shape memory work, contour political action, and frame historical events. It assembles archaeological, spoken, and documentary sources regarding the Eighteenth Century Gbe Kingdoms of West Africa to fold sacred trees, shrines, and cosmological actors into the cultural history of the region.

Akin Ogundiran

Place and Practice in Osun Grove (Nigeria): Analysis of a Landscape-Multiplex

The Osun Grove is the largest protected sacred secondary forest in West Africa and it is likely the most visited site of indigenous religion in Africa south of the Sahara. It is also a UNESCO's World Heritage site and a national monument in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Osun Osogbo Grove has received an intense scholarly attention mostly for its New Sacred Art School sculptures and for its annual festival dedicated to the river goddess – Osun. I argue that although the sculptures and the festival are important features of the grove, they do not represent the totality of the cultural landscape of Osun grove. My goal in this paper is to unfold the total landscape of Osun grove as a multiplex – a system of interdependent places, signs, practices, and meanings. On the basis of the first and only archaeological and landscape historical research that I have conducted at the site, I will examine the layers of places and practices that defined the Osun Grove, from its origins as a cosmopolitan frontier settlement about 400 years ago to its contemporary status as an arboreal refuge, a tourist center, and a multi-religion sanctuary (involving the Yoruba indigenous religion, Christianity, and Islam). I will show that the grove is an organically planned landscape that focuses on the meandering Osun river; the secondary forest, and the memory sites relating to the early history of Osogbo, among others. The topography of the grove, in relation to the ancient settlement, the river, trees, arts, and sacred and ritual spaces, will be used to disclose (1) the intersections of practice and place in the making of the cultural geography of the grove; and (2) the multiplexing character of the grove as a secular and sacred landscape.

Ikem Stanley Okoye

Good Bush, Bad Bush: Representing our Natures in Historical Southern Nigerian landscapes

The idea of the landscape has seemed a form of cultural cognition in which African society was not invested. This conclusion was unquestioned in part because the landscape was valorized in European and colonial American society in relation to its representation in art and literature –in media removed from the object of fascination itself, and therefore assuming a status as the marker of something like civilization. African societies appeared not to produce objectified representations of their landscapes in the scenic panoramic or narrative senses, and given the 19th century view of what Africa itself was as a cultural space (uncivilized), there was hardly any reason to question such positions. We are beginning to recognize that many African cultures did conceptualize the idea of the landscape, particularly since our scholarship has realized that the arena in which such representations occur may not exactly coincide with the arenas in European and American culture. Using southern Nigerian (Igbo) worlds as an instance,

and commencing with narratives and oral histories first documented in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the paper indicates how narratives of migration and settlement describe and implicate valuations of the landscape. More significant is that this culture also produced visual representation of the landscape. Unexpectedly, however, its media are in large part the very things constituting the natural landscape itself: preexisting flora and fauna manipulated into objecthood. Through this culture's concept of awesome or awful forests, the paper will indicate how via the manipulation of real forests, their extension, and their boundedness, Igbo society thought the idea of the natural landscape in contradistinction to the constructed one. Moreover, the very meaning of civilized human society in contrast to the wild and uncivilized, was theorized in this contrast between the "Good Bush" and the "Bad Bush" as African literatures in English, including those by novelists Chinua Achebe have had it. "Bad Bushes" were representations established within the space of civilized social settlement which, studded with objects of many kinds, also mapped an invisible or imaginary landscape of places to be avoided by all but the spiritually charged, as much as it referenced the socially dangerous places of the human psyche.

Innocent Pikirayi

Great Zimbabwe as Power-scape – How the past locates itself in contemporary southern Africa

In ca. 1550, chronicler João de Barros writing about Portuguese commercial encounters in south-eastern Africa, recorded secondhand accounts of a city and centre of an extant African civilization now identified with Great Zimbabwe. This ancient city located in the region of Butua, was to remain dormant in both written and oral accounts until the visit in 1871 by the German geologist Karl Mauch, who publicized it to the Western world. Since then the iconic architectural structures of this ancient city became a contested political terrain used by the colonial Rhodesians, the post-colonial Zimbabwe state and even individuals to project their own meanings and understanding of the place.

This presentation first examines Great Zimbabwe as a cultural landscape and landscape of political power that dominated the Zimbabwe plateau and adjacent regions of southern Africa during the early-mid second millennium AD. The city was at the helm of the global trade in gold and other precious commodities involving merchants from eastern Africa, southern Asia and the Far East. Its decline during the middle of the 16th century signified demise of trading networks with the Orient, and ushered in the Age of Europeans dominated by the Atlantic trade.

The presentation then examines the changing understandings of Great Zimbabwe as a 'powerscape' – first as a seat of political and economic power that became a site of religious significance, preserved and sustained by spirit mediums; secondly as a site of colonial power, which sought to deny the African origins of the place; and finally as a site of contemporary conflict, where political power in the present, particularly in Zimbabwe, attempts to utilize some elements of the past as an exercise in maintaining 'the tradition of the ancients'.

Maano Ramutsindela

'Nature's' regions and the mobilisation of cultural landscapes for conservation

Ideas about regions have changed over time to reflect new understandings, especially the ways in which regions of the mind translate into lived spaces that are imbued with both material and non-material meanings. There has been a shift away from conceiving regions as discrete, pre-given units towards appreciating regions and the meanings attached to them as fluid – since they are continuously being subjected to processes and practices prevailing in society at specific moments. This paper takes these interpretations of region formation and change as a starting point for understanding how cultural attributes that gave character to certain forms of regions are sometimes interrupted or reworked to produce cultural landscapes useful for conservation purposes. The paper seeks to demonstrate that, in contrast with the dialectical relationships between culture and conservation that dominated much of conservation practices in the last centuries, these relationships are being redefined to articulate cultural landscapes as a basis for creating conservation areas across international borders. This redefinition calls for a deeper reflection on cultural landscapes and their permutations. To this end, the paper pays attention to the cultural landscape of the San of Kalahari and the cultural heritage at Mapungubwe on the Botswana-South Africa-Zimbabwe borderland to achieve two interrelated objectives. The first objective is to show that these landscapes constituted regions in their own right. The way of life in these two sites traversed current state borders that had been imposed through colonialism. The second objective is to demonstrate that conservationists have used the narrative of colonial imposition and disruption to revive cultural landscapes and to present them as avenues for decolonisation consistent with conservation goals. In conservation logic, cultural landscapes that existed in the past can and should be deployed to delineate ecological regions in the form of present-day transfrontier conservation areas that straddle state borders. But the creation of these areas interrupts and fundamentally reconfigures the cultural landscapes on which they are founded, with huge implications for the Kalahari San in particular. The paper argues that the use of cultural landscapes to promote conservation in Southern Africa has produced multiple regional spaces that are conceptually and practically irreconcilable. These spaces are instructive of both the role played by cultural landscapes in regionalism and how regionalisation through nature conservation also shapes these landscapes.

Gemma Rodriguez

Sacred geographies of Chewa-speaking Zimbabweans in Harare

Approximately 60% of Harare's so-called high-density suburbs are occupied by Chewa-speakers descended from the migrant workers who moved from rural Malawi and Zambia to the city at various points over the last 120 years. The migrants brought with them distinctive forms of religious belief and the accompanying, ritually-based arts of masquerade of the Nyau society, which over time and generations I argue have been reconfigured to accommodate both the spatial and cadastral circumscriptions of a (post)colonial city and the diasporic condition of "totemlessness" (or, "not-belonging"). In rural Malawi, for example, Nyau societies typically required a secret, sacred grove to conduct their affairs. In Harare, where no sacred groves could be maintained, the Nyau instead turned

to the city's network of seasonal streams and marshes which they transformed into a viable substitute: a kind of covert, sacred hydropolis, where initiations could be conducted, sacred masks stored, and from whence the spirits (masked dancers) could emerge. Harare's topography--hilly ground punctuated by "vleis" or seasonal marshes fed by seasonal streams--has proven remarkably well suited to the Nyau's need for secrecy: the prohibitive expense of building on marshy land has meant that the city and its townships remain interspersed with green spaces that are usually invisible from main thoroughfares. These spaces register not as parks or recreational areas but as blank spots on the map. In the Nyau/Chewa imaginary, the streams and marshes that lie concealed in the heart the city and townships are conceptualized as home to and portal to the family ancestors and the primordial spirits. The streams are also conceived of as flowing "back" to Malawi (which in fact they do not), thus forming a kind of watery umbilical cord that simultaneously connects Chewa-speaking Zimbabweans to an imagined homeland and roots them within their immediate urban locale. In the context of Zimbabwe's recent past, in which a new politics of indigeneity has transformed popular understandings of land and citizenship and threatened literally to disenfranchise Zimbabwe's Chewa-speakers, the Nyau's ritually enacted forms of belonging have taken on added poignancy and in some cases political charge.

Michael Sheridan

Cultural capital and structural power in African landscapes: The social dynamics of sacred groves

Several years ago I outlined the argument that so-called 'sacred groves' in African landscapes were sites of ongoing ecological, socio-political, and symbolic-ideological dynamics. In this presentation I extend this work with a comparative review of the African sacred groves literature with a focus on how these sites were places for legitimizing particular social relationships in the pre-colonial period, and how these relationships changed over time in different historical periods. Throughout my emphasis is on how contemporary social theory helps to account for this process. Drawing on Bourdieu's approach to social and cultural capital and Wolf's delineation of different types of power (with a particular focus on what he calls 'structural power'), I provide a general overview of these culturally significant forests as social institutions, and pursue the connections with gender relations and social change. Most of the societies that have sacred grove institutions in tropical Africa are patrilineal, and these sites often represent the moral authority of the male ancestors. These gender/kinship dimensions of African landscape formation have not been very well explored in the regional scholarship. I argue that sacred sites were generally re-signified in the colonial and post-colonial contexts, and that gender/status categories were the substance of this process. Overall, then, today's patchwork of sacred sites in African landscapes persist as places of cultural meaning and power (which generally legitimize social practices), and shifting gender relations and status hierarchies are the key to understanding this continuity amidst so much social and ecological change.