

Geographies of Beef: Shadow Ecologies of European Green in African Landscapes

This seminar will delve into the socio-ecological impacts of European trade policies on beef production landscapes. It examines how these policies create "shadow ecologies", intertwining vital elements like land, livestock, and global markets with pressing issues such as sustainability, inequality, and environmental change.

Monday, 24 February 2025

15.00-17.00

University of Amsterdam
REC Building, Anthropology
Common Room (B5.12)
Join us via [zoom](#) or in person.
All welcome!

Speaker: **Dr. Pierre Louis du Plessis**
Aarhus University

Debater: **Dr. Else Vogel**
Assistant professor, Dpt. of Anthropology, UvA

Vital Elements Seminar Series

Vital Elements is a team-based ERC-advanced research project led by Amade Aouatef M'charek, Professor of Anthropology of Science at the University of Amsterdam, and implemented in partnership with the University of Sousse. The project aims at understanding migrant death in relation to, and in the context of, sources of life that we call *vital elements*. These are materialities that are crucial for life or spur on death in their absence, think of water, phosphate, salt, oil, seeds, fish or sea sponges. The project focuses mainly on the south of Tunisia and explores how these essential resources are connected to major global challenges - not only migration, but also pollution, environmental crises, climate change and colonial relations.

The Vital Elements Seminar Series brings together researchers from around the world to discuss these critical issues. The seminar is a space for experimenting and conversing about these complex questions across worlds. Crucially, given the nature of these issues the seminar attends to *how* we know; it attends to our methods of research. We thus hope to open up conversations about methodology and epistemology in relation to the issues we study.

The Vital Elements Seminar Series is a moving seminar, travelling between the universities of Sousse, Gabès, Sfax, Gafsa and Amsterdam. While sessions are mainly in English, questions can be asked in French or Arabic.

The seminar will be conducted in a **hybrid format**, allowing participants to join either in person or via Zoom. All welcome!





Dr. Pierre Louis du Plessis

Pierre du Plessis is an environmental anthropologist and multispecies ethnographer whose research has focused on practices of tracking and gathering as methods and analytics for understanding landscape change. His current research tracks how industrial beef production transforms landscapes in southern Africa and Europe. He has previously held research positions at the Oslo School of Environmental Humanities, University of Oslo, and as a DFF International Postdoc at Aarhus University and the University of Cape Town.

From Shadow Ecologies to Infrastructural Cascades: The emergence of a beef reserve and its ecological effects

This talk explores the social-historical emergence of Botswana as a beef reserve that feeds Europe and the resultant ecological effects that continue to ripple across Kalahari Desert landscapes. To do so, it introduces an interdisciplinary approach for studying infrastructure driven landscape change that colleagues and I call “infrastructural cascades.” This approach, drawing on the ecological notion of “trophic cascades,” emphasizes the ways in which distance-spanning historical and geopolitical processes become embedded in particular infrastructures to radically alter long-established, locally situated, landscape dynamics. It then examines how those infrastructures, initiated during the late colonial period, form the foundation of a telecoupled beef import/export industry that continues to shape Botswana’s landscapes as “shadow ecologies” of European beef consumption.