

# Experience Day African Studies

## 5 April 2024



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

### Introduction

A student of African Studies will tell you about your first year at this programme.

### Lecture + Seminar

#### **Title**

Who Owns Africa's Nature? Cultures and Environments in Africa

#### **Short description**

Our climate and the environment around us have changed rapidly and significantly over the last two centuries. Climate change and environmental damage are usually attributed to human activity in a general sense. In this lecture you'll be encouraged to think more specifically about human activity in relation to Africa's nature. The stereotypical images of the "African landscape" are a dry savannah dotted with scrub bushes or a dense jungle. In this experience day, we explore how these images of African nature in the public imagination have shaped local realities on the ground. We will explore these themes through sharing reflections on the lived experience of a well-known pastoralist community in East Africa: the Maasai in northern Tanzania. What does nature mean to them and how can we comprehend local worldviews and perspectives through languages, history and culture?

**Lecturer:** Dr. Sara de Wit ([s.de.wit@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:s.de.wit@hum.leidenuniv.nl))

I am an Assistant Professor at the department of History, Africa Section, at Leiden University. I have fieldwork experience in southeast Madagascar, the Bamenda Grassfields in Anglophone Cameroon and Maasailand in northern Tanzania. Important themes in my research are how global discourses and technologies travel to Africa, including ideas about development and humanitarianism, climate change, gender and water security.

### Q&A

Do you have any questions regarding the programme? The student will answer them all at the Q&A.

### Preparation

Think about movies about Africa in which nature plays an important role and reflect on the kind of nature that is represented. How do we like to see Africa's nature in popular culture? What is the role of nature in the life of local communities? Watch this short movie and the documentary 'Jozi Gold' (links below) as a preparation for the tutorial. Think about aspects you find interesting/new/difficult to understand in these video's, we can discuss them in class.

People have spoken (voices from Loliondo):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7knZOEVxO0k>

Jozi Gold:

<https://www.2doc.nl/documentaires/2020/09/jozi-gold.html>

Optional for Dutch speakers: to know more about African languages, browse through the Escape Room: [www.Stemmenvanafrika.nl/escape/](http://www.Stemmenvanafrika.nl/escape/)