

Visions of Nature

In Future Africa - Visions in Time

Aim

- Classify concepts of time and nature used by stakeholders and different disciplines.

Research questions

- How do prevailing visions of nature in diverse communities in Africa interact with those introduced by globalization, such as national parks?
- What role does religion play in the various nature-future notions?
- Can modelling abstractions give a consistent account of the current notions of time in the perception of nature?
- How is the concept of climate change appropriated in Africa?

Example 1: National parks

Encounters of "ethno-epistemologies" in African national parks

Examples:

- Air and Ténéré National Nature Reserve, Niger
- Aledeghe Wildlife Reserve Area, Ethiopia
- Matobo National Park, Zimbabwe
- Masai Mara, Kenya

Example 2: Climate change

African appropriation of climate change scenarios and discourses.

Pearl, J. (2000). Causality: models, reasoning and inference. Cambridge.
Descola, P. (2005). Par-delà nature et culture. Paris: Gallimard.
Rosen, R. (1991). Life itself (complexity in ecological systems series).



Table 1. Modeling approaches by epistemic attitudes

	Functional model exo-observer <i>Science of seeing</i>	Interactive model endo-observer <i>Art of doing</i>
World given	Natural science	Hermeneutic sciences
Time concepts	Revolving clocks	Evolving histories

Concepts

Epistemic attitudes (columns in Table 1) can be expressed by observer roles (endo or exo) or mathematical tools leading to two packages („Science of seeing“ or „Art of Doing“), proposed by J. Pearl (2000). They are formally corresponding, but historically only the former has been fully recognized in science.

Revolving clocks: cyclic (lat: revolvere) mechanisms are used in natural science as clocks keeping track of local time. The world is characterized by natural law, which represents a syntax (Rosen 1991).

Evolving histories are constructed by "cultures" (collectives) based on experiences and expectations; historical events have meaning (semantics). History and evolution are used as open ended concepts in natural and cultural sciences.

World given: a situation in which a material structure or an interacting behavior needs to be represented by a model.

Time: different world views have characteristic mixtures of linear and cyclic processes; Here, world views of "cultures" will be classified into "ethno-epistemologies" (Descola, 2005).