



## Sheona in Berlin

Sheona Shackleton was invited by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to present a keynote address on the first day of a 3 day conference on “Sustainable Land Management Challenges and Opportunities” in Berlin, Germany.

The conference was the culmination of seven years of research by 12 regional projects covering most of the continents and many countries in both the global North and South. Their research investigated the complex interactions between land use, global environmental change and ecosystem services with many of the researchers presenting fascinating talks covering a wide range of topics related to agriculture and land management. Sheona’s address was entitled “Beyond farmers and fields to livelihoods and landscapes: Reimagining rural Africa in the Anthropocene.”

The BMBF representative indicated that several of the ideas in the address will be useful in thinking through their next major funding call for further research on land and sustainability. The theme of transdisciplinarity, an approach and philosophy that guides the work of the DES, was highlighted throughout the conference, and it was great to see some of the projects’ non-academic stakeholders from both communities and NGOs presenting talks (we can all learn from this).

Sheona at “Check Point Charlie” - the USA managed border check point between the previous West and East Germany (photo: Paul Hebinck)



### Inside this issue:

Gamuchirai goes to Europe	2 & 3
New Masters students	3
Where is Brendan Turk?	4
Honours fieldtrip to Tsitsa Falls	5
DES works with SAPECS	6
Graduation 2016	7

### Special points of interest:

- May 3rd: International Migratory Bird Day
- May 22nd: World Biodiversity Day
- May 31st: Anti tobacco Day
- June 5th: World Environment Day
- June 8th: World Oceans Day
- July 11th: World Population Day

## Gamuchirai goes to Europe



The trip was divided into two parts. Firstly, a visit to Denmark for a Rurban Conference at the University of Copenhagen from 22-28 January and secondly, a visit to Germany for a LUNA II project meeting with our project collaborators at University of Freiburg from 28 January -7 February.

When Charlie and I arrived in Copenhagen, it was windy, very cold and it was snowing. Coming from a country that never has snow, I got to witness my first ever snowfall. It was a great feeling like no other! We took a taxi from the airport to the hotel where we were staying. I couldn't take my eyes off the window, seeing snow actually falling from the sky and covering the cars and streets was an awesome experience for me.

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The weather in Copenhagen did not really allow me to stroll the streets as it was incredibly cold and raining. Charlie and I attended the conference from 25 - 28 January. The conference was mostly on rural-urban connections in Sub-Saharan Africa, tackling issues of rural transformations, mobility and urbanisation. It was a great opportunity to hear various talks and debates around these issues as well as meeting up with some of the inspiring women I'm even citing in my work.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Charlie and I had to take separate ways and that was our

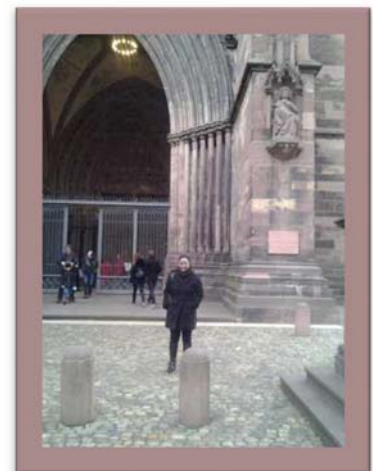
last day in Denmark. I had to go to Freiburg and stay there until our meeting which was starting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. I took a connecting flight from Copenhagen to Frankfurt via Berlin. With only 45 minutes transfer time between flights and quite long walking distance between the terminals, thanks to the great signage all over Berlin airport, I was on time. I arrived at Frankfurt airport in the afternoon and I took a train to Freiburg. Along the way, all information and instructions were being given in German so I was completely lost since I couldn't understand even a single word. I was mostly clueless about the journey and all I knew was that it was going to take me about two hours to reach Freiburg so I kept on checking the time and hoping to hear the word "Freiburg" when officials announced the stations.

After getting off in Freiburg, I only needed to cross the road and walk for about two minutes to the hotel. I stayed at Rheingold hotel which is also within five minutes walking distance to the theatre, the Freiburg Cathedral, University of Freiburg library and all kinds of shops. The weather in Freiburg was not that bad, or I had adjusted following the Copenhagen experience! Days passed by, and the meeting started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February where each country in the project was supposed to report on their



progress and findings since it was the end of the project.

I gave a brief presentation on my project and our findings on food security in South Africa and everyone was happy with the progress. It was great to be part of the project and seating in such a meeting with other academics in my field from different countries.

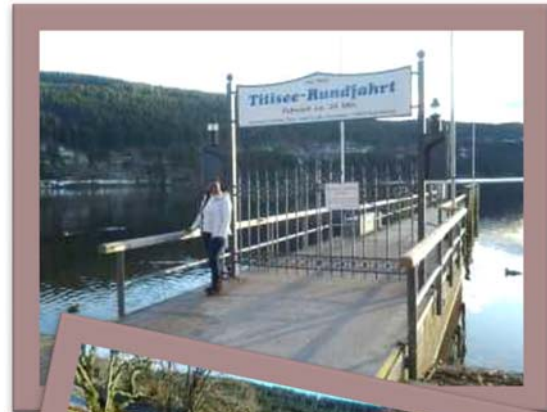


## Gamuchirai (contd...)

After the conference I had a opportunity to tour Frieburg. I visited the Black Forest which is well known for its dense evergreen forests which would be covered in snow in winter. In this area, I was hoping to see the trees and houses covered in snow as well as seeing the frozen Lake Titisee. Unfortunately, when I arrived, the ice had melted and it was just like any other lake.

I took a train the next day to Zurich in Switzerland, which I had to change in Zurich to take another one to the airport. For this one, I was

relaxed because the train officials were communicating in three languages, English, French and Germany. I knew I was never going to get lost. I felt ambivalent about my journey back to South Africa, but I had missed my family so much. I would like to thank my supervisor Prof Charlie Shackleton for giving me this great opportunity which was both an educational and a "touring" trip. What an exciting and unforgettable experience!



## New Masters students: Lesego and Stephanie

Gladman received an NRF grant for two Masters students (one full time and one part time).

Lesego Molobi is the full-time candidate. She is from Johannesburg and is a Rhodes University alumnus who graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Environmental Science and Geography. During that year she was enrolled at the University



of Cape Town and is due to graduate with her Honours degree in Environmental and Geographical Sciences this year. The title of her dissertation is "User-driven intervention strategies for fostering energy-saving in South Africa". She enjoys socialising with friends, hiking and crafting. Some of her interests in the field include waste management, conservation, land degradation, environmental auditing and sustainable development.

Stephanie Williams is the part-time candidate. She is currently researching energy user intervention strategies that foster pro-environmental behaviour in households.

She studied at the University of Stellenbosch where she completed her degree in Development and Environment, and went on to study at the University of Cape Town where she completed her Honours in Environmental Geographical Sciences. The environment is a deep passion of hers and a subject that constantly surprises her due to the many spheres and topics it overlaps with. It is her goal to contribute to and educate herself in sustainable development and matters concerning the environment.



## Where is Brendan Turk?



I completed my Environmental Science honours in 2008 and stepped into the working world during the recession. While searching for a job in my field of study I worked for a year training horses on a stud farm in Kyalami. It was a tough start but I eventually landed a role as a Junior Environmental Consultant with EIMS

(Environmental Impact Management Services) in Johannesburg where, during my brief tenure, I worked on a number of interesting projects including the NMPP and the Duvha-Leseding power line.

All of the skills I learned during my time studying Environmental Science were put to good use at EIMS. I was arranging and conducting public participation meetings, performing Environmental audits, managing a bevy of independent contractors from translators to archaeologists and writing up EIAs.

Although I enjoyed this, I had a taste of natural resource costing and corporate responsibility whilst at Rhodes and I realised that my passion was really in the business and accounting side of things. This coupled with a desire for big city lights and a drive to change

my career encouraged

me to pack up my life into two suitcases and buy a one-way ticket to London.

London was colder, tougher but far more exciting than I had ever anticipated. It really is a city alive with possibilities, but it doesn't hand them out easily! I started my new career in an office post room. Any job is a good job when you're trying to earn money! It wasn't long before that same company offered me the opportunity to work as a Finance Coordinator in their accounting department. After a year of grasping the basics, I knew that this was the right path for me, so I began to study my ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) qualification in the evenings after work. It was an uphill climb, working all day then studying 3-4hrs in the evening but my learning came on in leaps and bounds and I soon began to progress up the career ladder.

On my journey, one thing that I found both surprising and invaluable was how transferable many of the skills I learned from Environmental Science were to the accounting profession, so seemingly different from one another. One key aspect of a management accountant's role is stakeholder management and stakeholder engagement - a clear skill I'd learned from studying Environmental



Science. The ability to manage a project and understand how it all fits together is another invaluable strength that Environmental Science taught me. On top of these, I found it to be a real advantage that I'd been taught to always see the holistic picture and constantly put this skill to good use. If you do change careers, never discount what you learned as all those skills will help you to differentiate and stand out against the crowd!

After a long and somewhat stressful 4 year journey, I am a fully qualified chartered certified accountant. I now work as a Senior Strategy & Business Analyst at Moody's Investor Services, still in London. Even more so than before I am leveraging what I learned from Environmental Science to help me succeed on a daily basis.

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## 2016 Honours fieldtrip—Tsitsa Falls, Maclear



By Yondela Norman

The Honours class of 2016 set off on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February to Tsitsa Falls Backpackers near Maclear to learn about, and contribute to assessing, the Ntabelanga catchment's condition for rehabilitation purposes and for learning about landscapes. This is especially important considering that the Eastern Cape government has prospects on building one of the country's largest dams in the catchment. Upon arriving at the backpackers, one is greeted with rolling green hills with beautiful rocky outcrops and a tranquil

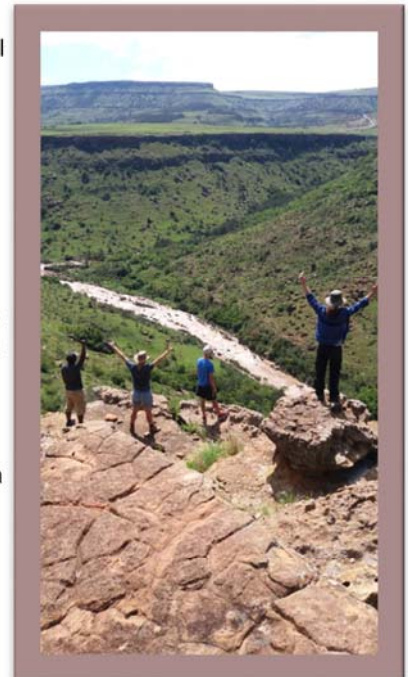
campsite overlooking the Tsitsa River and Falls. We were welcomed and treated like family by the Adriaan and Angela Badenhorst, who—along with their two kids—run what was to be our base of operations for that week.

During our stay at Tsitsa Falls we engaged in a wide variety of tasks, from showing the locals of Ntataneni Village their home via Google Earth, determining the densities of invasive wattle trees outside the village; mapping land-use activities in the Ntabelanga catchment and learning the principles of Participatory Learning and Action as a class.

As hard as we worked, we made sure not to miss out on the activities

on offer at Tsitsa Falls. We did practically everything from self-guided walks along the gorge (which has fantastic views of the landscape), swimming in the waterfall pool to zip lining across the Falls themselves and ending off the trip with a rave session around the campfire.

The field trip was truly an unforgettable experience and a great way for the Honours students to establish bonds as a class and as a Department.



## DES works with SAPECS

Recently, DES played a key role when [SAPECS](#) (Southern African Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society), CGIAR's programme on [Water, Land and Ecosystems](#) (WLE) and the [Natural Capital Project](#) (NatCap), teamed up to run a workshop on the NatCap's approach and tools for modelling ecosystem services. In recent years, NatCap's modelling platforms, particularly [INVEST](#) and [RIOS](#), have become indispensable communication, scoping and scenario development tools for social-ecological projects globally. DES lecturer Alta De Vos helped to organise the meeting, whilst PhD student Dylan Weyer also participated.

Although anyone can download and use their software, NatCap pride themselves on iteratively developing



tools through a deep engagement with on-the-ground projects. The main objective of our training was to foster such an engagement between NatCap and various SAPECS and WLE projects, and to build capacity for ecosystem service modelling within our regions. More technically, the workshop aimed to introduce participants to the RIOS and INVEST ecosystem services tools, how they work, their capabilities and limitations. The training was designed for participants to achieve basic familiarity with these models, including how to select and run them, troubleshoot, and interpret/communicate results.

The three-day training took place at the state-of-the-art Wallenberg centre at the Stellenbosch centre for advanced studies (STIAS), on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of November. After a round of introductions on the first day, participants were quickly confronted with trade-offs in ecosystem services in an interactive land use planning game. The main focus on this introductory day was on over-

view and ap-



proach, from scoping and data collection to engaging stakeholders.

The technical part of the workshop commenced on day two. On these two days, using data from Kenya's Tana River valley, participants got their hands dirty with InVEST and RIOS. They focused particularly on the sediment retention, water yield and carbon models, but also explored a range of other popular tools. To consolidate and contextualise, participants learned how to develop scenarios and build portfolios in RIOS, culminating with an interactive presentation to mock stakeholders on the last day of the training.

The training was a great success. From the final presentations, it was clear that the workshop had

and that it was an important first step towards achieving much longer-term aims. It facilitated capacity building, fostered new relationships and represented important steps in strengthening the relationship between NatCap, SAPECS and WLE. We can't wait to see what these relationships will mean for the future of action-based social-ecological projects.

A big thank you to everyone who made this training happen - [SwedBio](#), who co-funded many of the SAPECS participants, the wonderful team at [CSIR](#) and Stellenbosch University, our collaborators at WLE (particularly Natalia Estrada-Carmona) and of course the energetic NatCap team, the conduits of knowledge without whom none of this would have happened!

## Graduation 2016

### Graduation 2016

This year saw a total of 26 of our students graduating. 1 PhD (Precillia Tata-Ngome), 5 Masters (Heather Maseko, Rebone Modipa, Kyle Langley, Tracey Steyn and Karabo Chadzingwa) and 20 Honours students. Well done to you all. Our department currently has 50 senior postgrads, 12 Honours students and 140 undergraduates. We are one of the most productive departments in the University in terms of per capita research outputs. In 2015 we had 22 journal publications, 11 book contributions, 6 policy briefs and popular articles and 22 conference presentations. In 2016, we already have 16 journal publications, only 4 months into the year!



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