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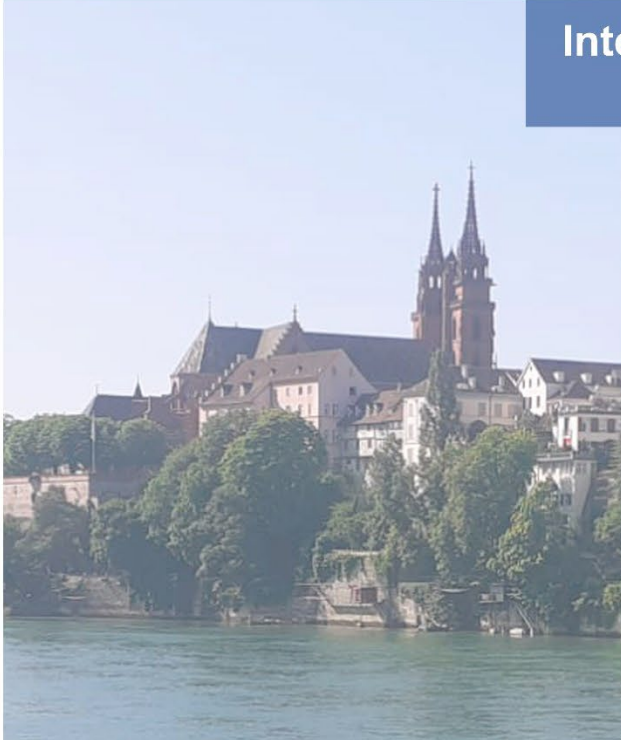


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Humans and the Landscape(s): an Everlasting Story of Mutual Interactions

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Book of Abstracts

Humans and the Landscape(s): An Everlasting Story of Mutual Interactions

Organization: S. Alfarano and S. Baldin



- Universität Basel • Departement Altertumswissenschaften • Graduiertenkonferenz •
Bildungszentrum 21/Hotel Odelya, Missionsstrasse 21, 4055 Basel
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<https://daw.philhist.unibas.ch/de/event/details/humans-and-the-landscapes-an-everlasting-story-of-mutual-interactions/>

Humans and the Landscape(s): An Everlasting Story of Mutual Interactions

A landscape is defined as "a tract of land with its distinguishing characteristics and features, especially considered as a product of modifying or shaping processes". Landscape encompasses the visible features of an area, however, what distinguishes it is not solely its natural attributes but also the profound influence of agents impacting meaningfully on its essence. Human intervention, plays a central role in shaping landscapes, imprinting upon them layers of cultural, social, and economic significance. Ever since the dawn of civilization, humankind's endeavors have left an indelible mark on the earth's surface, redrawing it through the steps of a progressive appropriation and all-round management. Thus, landscape emerges not just as a passive backdrop but as a dynamic reflection of human interaction with the environment, a product of our ability to mold and be molded by the world around us. This fertile relationship between human agency and the natural world carves not only the physical contours of natural landscapes but also the cultural and social fabric of human civilization, as the environment stands as the linchpin around which societies develop their customs, traditions, and belief systems. From human responses to environmental constraints and opportunities in the definition of economic panoramas, to the natural features of the land setting the guiding thread of human settlement patterns by influencing layout and infrastructure of urban areas, to the cultural appropriation and identification with the natural heritage, every human dimension reflects the dictates of a dense dialogue with the natural context surrounding us.

The suggested conference endeavors to delve into the multifaceted relationship between human intervention and environmental dynamics, elucidating the intricate processes and outcomes stemming from this continuous interaction. By promoting a comprehensive dialogue between disciplines that embrace historical, archaeological, social, and literary perspectives, the event seeks to elucidate the nuanced ways in which human societies interacted with their environment, shaping and being shaped by it from ancient civilizations to modern times across the vast expanse of human history. With a set of diverse lenses shedding light on the different ways in which humankind and the environment cooperate in the development of spaces, the discussion aims to unravel the infinite manifestations of this inextricable tie, thereby hopefully contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex interrelationships that underpin the formation of human landscapes.

Program

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

09.15–09.30 **Welcome**

Paths and Patterns Changing Ancient Environments

09.30–10.00 **MA A. Nikulina, University of Leiden/Durham:** Pre-agricultural vegetation dynamics: modelling hunter-gatherer impact in interglacial Europe

10.00–10.30 **Dr. M. Crepy, CNRS-Hisoma, University of Lyon:** Usual suspects: climate and societies in Egypt

10.30–11.00 **Coffee break**

Between Life and Death: Funerary Landscapes and Their Symbolism

11.00–11.30 **MA T. de Gellinck, University of Basel:** The funerary landscape of the Theban necropolis as represented in Theban tombs from the 18th Dynasty

11.30–12.00 **MA N. Savaresi, University of Basel:** Dead Men Do Tell Tales. Funerary landscape(s) in Francavilla Marittima, IT

12.00–12.30 **Final discussion**

12.30–14.30 **Lunch**

Wordscapes: how Language Molds the Surrounding

14.30–15.00 **MA G. Spaans, University of Basel:** Interaction between Pre-Proto-Albanians and their landscape in Antiquity: what can we tell from linguistic data?

15.00–15.30 **Dr. C. Luz, University of Basel:** Landscape and literature: shaping space with words

15.30–16.00 **Coffee break**

Program

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Cultural Landscapes: Bridging Space, Time, and Language

16.00–16.30 **Dr. A. Muñoz Herrera, University of Madrid:** Landscape as a spacetime conception. The 'ontological turn' and cognitive archaeology in Egypt's cultural transition from Neolithic to Pharaonic era

16.30–17.00 **MA A. Herren, University of Basel:** Landscape and Lexicon in Romanian-Albanian Cognates

17.00–17.30 **Final Discussion**

19.00 **Conference Dinner**

Thursday, December 5, 2024

Markers of Change: Bioarchaeological Evidence in Human/Nature Dynamics

9.00–9.30 **MA C. Antler, University of Glasgow:** Making a 'Roman Landscape': Modelling human-environment dynamics in Central Italy throughout 1st millennium BC

9.30–10.00 **Dr. C. Abatino, University of Salento:** Human-landscape interaction and the impact in animal management during the Middle Ages in the Salento region

10.00–10.30 **Coffee break**

Water: Shaping Element of Interaction and Separation

10.30–11.00 **Dr. M. Cè, University of Basel:** Across Rivers and Forests: Caesarian Border Angst in the Gallic War

11.00–11.30 **Dr. P. Marcato, University of Salento:** From sea to land: Network analysis in Byzantine Southern Italy

11.30–12.00 **Final discussion**

Paths and Patterns Changing Ancient Environments

Pre-agricultural vegetation dynamics: modelling hunter-gatherer impact in interglacial Europe

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This study explores the earliest human impact on interglacial landscapes in Europe before agriculture. Evidence of vegetation burning by hunter-gatherers has been identified in archaeological contexts from both the Early–Middle Holocene (~11,700–6000 BP) and the Last Interglacial (~130,000–116,000 BP). However, it remains challenging to determine whether these forager activities were confined to local-scale landscape changes or extended to regional or even (sub-) continental scales. To address this, our study examines multiple drivers of landscape dynamics. By integrating various spatial datasets within a novel agent-based model called HUMAN impact on LANDscapes (HUMLAND), we have, for the first time, been able to differentiate and quantify the roles of climatic influences, megafauna plant consumption, natural fires, and anthropogenic fires caused by Neanderthals and Mesolithic humans. Our modelling results support the hypothesis that European ecosystems were substantially shaped by human activities well before the onset of agriculture.

Usual suspects: climate and societies in Egypt

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Landscapes results from the interaction between society and the environment, and from individual or group of individual's conception and representations of all the natural and human elements they can encompass in a single view. So, when it comes to landscapes of the past, what is reconstituted is a composite of disparate and incomplete material elements and remains that are still perceptible, and a present-day vision that aims to give them an environmental and/or historical meaning. Researchers are still influenced by the major trends and current of thoughts born from our present-day society. As a result, in a context of global climate change induced by anthropogenic factors, it is common, to elucidate the origins of landscape or environmental change, to resort either to a climatic explanation, or to purely human actions corresponding either to conscious land management, or to the unconscious result of over-exploitation of the environment. Using examples from two periods (termination of the African Humid period, Roman and Late Roman Egypt), this contribution will show that one or other explanation is not sufficient on its own, and that socio-ecosystems go through distinct phases where their evolution follows a – sometimes unsustainable – trajectory, and others where they experience profound crises due to threshold effects involving multiple factors.

Between Life and Death: Funerary Landscapes and Their Symbolism

The funerary landscape of the Theban necropolis as represented in Theban tombs from the 18th Dynasty

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The funerary rites depicted in Theban tombs from the beginning of the 18th Dynasty provide us with highly complex ritual scenes. These include processions visiting the Delta cities of Sais and Bouto, as well as Abydos. Additionally, priests worship chapels from Upper and Lower Egypt. They make offerings and prayers to palaces and temples, and pass through a funerary garden, where obelisks are erected. In this remote area of the necropolis, ritual dancers rest in their apartment, deities await in their chapels, and enigmatic entities with no arms stand guard over great doors.

However, under the reign of Amenhotep II, the Egyptians depicted their funerals in a strikingly different manner, abandoning all ancillary rites and focusing solely on the crossing of the Nile and the procession to the tomb. The chapels, buildings, obelisks, and gardens were replaced by stalls situated next to the funeral procession. Could this change in the representation of burial be interpreted as a return to reality or is it simply iconographical?

Dead Men Do Tell Tales. Funerary landscape(s) in Francavilla Marittima, IT

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The Oenotrian necropolis of Macchiabate, in Southern Italy, represents a significant archaeological site that provides a unique insight into the burial practices and socio-cultural dynamics of the local community. Since 2009, several field campaigns of the University of Basel contribute to uncover parts of its long history. This research delves into the complex stratification of funerary acts within the necropolis, exploring not only the physical remnants of past rituals but also the immaterial capital of meaning that these layers represent. Through a multilevelled analysis, this essay aims to uncover how the historical accumulation of burial practices has shaped both the physical space of Macchiabate and the intangible heritage that underpins the community's past consciousness and experience of the place.

The necropolis of Macchiabate is characterized by a dense concentration of burial sites that span several centuries, each layer of graves reflecting the evolving customs, beliefs, and social structures of who lived around the ancient sanctuary of Timpone della Motta, in the immediate vicinity of the Greek colony of Sybaris. The act of burying the deceased was not merely a practical necessity but a ritual imbued with meaning, contributing to the construction of a shared identity and memory. Over time, the repeated performance of these burial rituals within the same physical space endowed the necropolis with a profound immaterial capital, a reservoir of cultural and spiritual significance that transcended the individual lives of those interred. The necropolis thus served not only as a resting place for the dead but also as a focal point for the living, at the crossroad for ethnic and cultural lines, where the past was continuously reinterpreted and integrated into the present.

Wordscapes: how Language Molds the Surrounding

Interaction between Pre-Proto-Albanians and their landscape in Antiquity: what can we tell from linguistic data?

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Thanks to the extensive Ancient Greek literature, we have a relatively good understanding of the interaction between the Ancient Greeks and their landscape (the southern Balkans). However, this also forms a problem: almost everything we think we know about the Balkan peoples in Antiquity was written by Greek hands. In order to gain a more nuanced picture of the roles of both the Ancient Greeks and the other peoples in the Balkan landscape in Antiquity, a different perspective is needed. Apart from the Greeks, the Albanians are the only other people that have survived in the Balkans continuously from Antiquity until the present. The ancestor from Antiquity of the Albanian language is commonly referred to as 'Pre-Proto-Albanian'. It remains unclear, however, to which classical Balkan tribe the Pre-Proto-Albanians belonged and when in the intermediate history they lived where precisely, but a small number of suggested loanwords from Ancient Greek in Albanian suggests that they lived in close proximity to the Ancient Greeks. Therefore, it is difficult to reconstruct the role that the Pre-Proto-Albanians played in the Balkan landscape. However, due to their geographic isolation, many Albanians maintained a traditional farming- and shepherding-based lifestyle until the 19th-20th century. By comparing this lifestyle to the reconstructed vocabulary of (Pre-)Proto-Albanian, I will make a proposal of how the Pre-Proto-Albanians interacted with their landscape.

Landscape and literature: shaping space with words

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In ancient Greek literature, landscape often plays a significant part as a backdrop for literary action. Ancient authors create designed space in order to provide a stage for what they write, be it narrative or drama, political speech or even philosophical dialogue. Literary landscape can thus manifest itself in various ways, from mimetic representation of geographical reality to idealised or imaginary scenery, or even be reduced to symbolic props. In the present paper, I would like to focus on a particular type of landscape, which occurs in a range of ancient texts from the Homeric epics onwards: the *locus amoenus*, usually translated as a "pleasant place". Taking its model undoubtedly from nature herself, the *locus amoenus* is not a real place in time and space, but an idealised piece of land, in which nature shows itself from its sweetest side: trees provide shade, flowers adorn the place and scent the air, a spring or rivulet supplies freshness and adds with its murmur to a soothing sonorous background - sometimes supported by the singing of birds; and finally, soft grass invites the passer-by to sit down and rest.

The earliest extant *locus amoenus* in Greek literature, being located on the mythical island of the nymph Calypso in the *Odyssey*, belongs to the sphere of the divine; later, the *locus amoenus* is taken up in various literary genres and, one might say, it reaches its climax in bucolic poetry, where it represents the very essence of an idealised pastoral world in which humans and animals live in perfect harmony. Thus, becoming a literary *topos*, the *locus amoenus* does more than setting the scene for a particular literary context. Rather every instance of a *locus amoenus* evokes such instances in other texts and so by association connects its immediate context to other literary works. As a result, we find an interplay of texts relating to one another through their common topic of the *locus amoenus*.

The aim of this paper is to show how the *locus amoenus* being intrinsically a piece of landscape designed by human imagination develops into a literary motif with its own tradition, which takes its beginning in the Homeric *Odyssey* and lives on well into modern times.

Cultural Landscapes: Bridging Space, Time, and Language

Landscape as a spacetime conception. The 'ontological turn' and cognitive archaeology in Egypt's cultural transition from Neolithic to Pharaonic era

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In the established view within landscape archaeology, the reciprocal relationship between society and the environment has been well-documented for over 40 years. However, these studies have traditionally been conducted within an ontological framework of sensorial experience that relies on a model that divides nature from culture; a model that recent anthropological research has begun to dismantle (the 'ontological turn'). This nature-culture split is primarily a construct of Western contingency and is not consistently reflected in the global anthropological record. Additionally, theoretical physics discoveries in the past century have highlighted a model of reality where space and time are in fact a unified dimension (spacetime).

This paper reevaluates the cultural processes in Nilotic societies during the transition from the Neolithic to the Pharaonic period, drawing on anthropological turn and the concept of spacetime. Applying anthropological and landscape theory and cognitive archaeology (supported by innovative eye-tracking studies), this research aims to study the archaeological record through a fresh perspective, emphasizing the landscape's intrinsic role in triggering and shaping cultural processes. The findings of this research suggest that landscape is not simply a backdrop to cultural activity or a repository of ideas; rather, it is a crucial agent in the formation of those ideas. Natural and topographical phenomena, along with seasonal patterns of experience (space and time), build the ontological framework that enables the schematization of shared experience and lays the foundation for the cultural development of this civilization. Changes in space or time altered this ontological structure, leading to new social models and materiality while maintaining a shared idea of sacrality with previous frameworks.

Landscape and Lexicon in Romanian-Albanian Cognates

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The ongoing discussion of the so-called “autochthonous” lexemes in Romanian is a substantial topic in Historical (Romance) Linguistics. Most of these lexical items, which are not inherited from Latin nor borrowed from Slavic, Germanic, Ugric, or Turkic languages, have corresponding lexemes in Modern Albanian. However, the analysis of these lexemes has been problematised by nationalistic bias and dubious reconstructions of Trümmersprachen.

The semantic field of these Romanian words with Albanian correspondences is surprisingly narrow, with a majority covering the field of livestock breeding and the landscapes in which it occurred, an economy that has long been a staple of the Balkans. By re-evaluating the etymology of these lexical items, we can gain a profound insight into the contact situations between these speaker communities and the impact that the landscapes had on their economies and societal structure.

These lexemes can explicitly refer to specific landscape-defining elements, such as mountain peaks, soil conditions, and natural waters, to provide a few examples. Additionally, some lexemes refer to specific elements in flora and fauna, which can narrow down the geography of the possible area where language contact occurred, e.g., the words for ‘birch’ (*Alb bredh*, *Rom brad*) and ‘tick’ (*Alb këpushë*, *Rom căpușă*).

Thus, in this talk, I aim to explore the lexemes shared by Romanian and Albanian that defined the landscape of their speaker communities in late antiquity. I will argue that the communities speaking Proto-Albanian and Proto-Eastern-Romance languages were in contact and exchanged knowledge about breeding livestock in the mountainous regions of the southern Balkans.

Markers of Change: Bioarchaeological Evidence in Human/Nature Dynamics

Making a 'Roman Landscape': Modelling human-environment dynamics in Central Italy throughout 1st millennium BC

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The turn of the 1st millennium BC has marked the beginning of massive transformation process of the natural landscape in the region of Central Italy. This process, which continued and carried on for centuries later, resulted in a new anthropogenic landscape, one which was perceived and maintained by the Romans as their own. Still, work needs to be done to explore the connection between the activity of landscape modification and the creation of communal identity in Iron Age Rome. A central step in this direction is to evaluate the scale of human impact in the past on the nature of the region, namely, how the land was used and how it has changed, and how the characteristics of the natural environment itself have facilitated the developments reflected in the archaeological record of the region. With this purpose in mind and in the context of a wider research project, a new Landscape Reconstruction Algorithms (LRA) model was created, making use of fossil-pollen data from lacustrine sediments in seven lakes across the region, to quantify the mutual impact that environment and people have had over each other throughout the 1st millennium BC. The model resulted in a better understanding of how environment looked prior to any major human intervention and how it was consequently transformed by it.

This paper will present some of the result of the model, discussing the medley of agents which impacted the environment from naturally occurring climate changes, to man-made activities such as resource utilization and management. It will also demonstrate how flexible temporal resolution allows us to explore the lifespan of landscapes, both on their millennia longue durée perspective and in the high-temporal resolution of human experience. It will then further expand on changes in the landscape as seen through key human events in the 1st millennium BC of the region such as: the emergence of new cultural centers and economic dynamics at the beginning of the Iron Age, the expansion and dominance of Roman cultural across the region centuries later, and finally, the impact of Imperial expansion beyond the land on its composition. Lastly, it will address the challenges and potential of using modelling to understand human-environment interaction especially in the context of their contribution to archaeological work and interpretations.

Human-landscape interaction and the impact in animal management during the Middle Ages in the Salento region

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Reconstructing the transformations of the rural landscape in the Salento region (south-eastern Italy) has been encouraged in the last decade by research projects involving numerous specialists, who have cooperated to outline the historical, political, cultural and environmental framework during the Middle Ages. Byzantine, Norman, Swabian, Angevin and Aragonese dominations followed one another during this long chronological span on the Salento peninsula. These historical events brought significant changes in various aspects of society, such as settlement structure, material culture, agricultural practices, religious practices and foodways. The presence of new dominations on the territory has started a process of cultural assimilation which has resulted in a phenomenon of coexistence and cohesion of cultures and social habits. Recently it has been highlighted how complex it is to discuss the interaction between man and ecosystem on a historical, archaeological, and environmental base. These are the reasons that lead to research on an interdisciplinary basis, which uses all available documentary sources. The analysis of faunal samples can certainly contribute to the reconstruction of historical phenomena on a large chronological and territorial scale, since the animal remains found in archaeological excavations reflect much more than the diet, but also the complex network of economic, social, religious and political aspects. In fact, the study of faunal remains from some medieval sites has made it possible to reconstruct livestock management and exploitation strategies over the centuries and to observe changes and/or improvements in breeding techniques. The contribution of zooarchaeology and the importance of the interdisciplinary approach to reconstruct social dynamics and historical phenomena on a chronological scale will be discussed.

Water: Shaping Element of Interaction and Separation

Across Rivers and Forests: Caesarian Border Angst in the Gallic War

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Anyone with even a passing familiarity with the rivers of Europe will probably agree, intuitively or upon reflection, that they – far from being hard and fast dividers between different linguistic, cultural, and national groups – on the contrary constitute spaces of communion and commerce for inhabitants of either riverbank. Yet the ancient Roman politician, general, and writer Gaius Julius Caesar would have the readers of his chef-d'oeuvre (a readership that continues to the present) believe otherwise. In the *Gallic War*, he insists repeatedly on the Rhine as an absolute line of demarcation between Gaul to the southwest and Germany to the northeast, that is, between a territory that is gradually being subsumed into Roman rule during Caesar's military campaign (58–50 BCE) and a territory that categorically stands outside the remit of Roman geopolitical ambition altogether.

In this presentation, I aim to demonstrate that Caesar's geodeterminist view of the Rhine as a preexisting and insurmountable boundary is not only belied by historical realities, but time and again is undermined by the author himself. Thus, we find that Caesar frequently refers to military and mercantile exchanges between Gallic and Germanic tribes across the Rhine as well as admitting to the existence of definitionally problematic categories, such as "Germans" settled on the "Gallic" side of the river. Building on recent scholarship that has argued for the pivotal importance of Germany and the Germans to Caesar's rhetorical *projet*, perhaps even eclipsing the author's nominal focus on Gaul, I show that the *Gallic War's* essentializing construction of the Rhine is a direct extension of the work's general obsession with what has been termed the Roman 'other other'

In parallel with exaggerating the Rhine's function as a territorial determinant, Caesar systematically deemphasizes the more plausible frontier further inland that Roman troops would encounter in Germany's strategic wastelands and impenetrable forests. As a result, the Rhine, which at a total of 68 mentions figures more prominently in the *Gallic War* than all other major rivers combined, emerges as a potent symbol of the Roman division between conquerable and unconquerable land. Through a discursive simplification of Germany's *situs*, Caesar mounts a forceful attempt to define the limitations of Roman imperialism on his own terms, but not without betraying a marked anxiety regarding his Gaul's principal border. Despite (or perhaps due to) the fundamental constructedness

of the Rhine as a human-made natural boundary, Caesar's concomitant vision of Western Europe, codified within mere decades of his death in the provincial policy of his successors, would endure to shape geopolitical realities to this day.

From sea to land: Network analysis in Byzantine Southern Italy

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The Byzantine Empire can be considered as a complex system, in which network analysis helps to reveal part of this complexity, made up of cultural and material exchanges. Thanks to the integration of archaeological data, written sources, and geographical context, this approach provides valuable support in investigating, through computational tools, the historical and territorial dynamics that characterised Southern Italy during the Byzantine period.

Starting from the analysis of maritime networks between Southern Italy and the eastern part of the Empire, it becomes clear that specific coastal sectors of the Italian Peninsula and Sicily played a central role in this system, which was highly interconnected with the geopolitical dynamics of the Western Mediterranean. Moving from a supra-regional scale analysis towards a local perspective, the study explores how the proposed networks also reflect settlement dynamics and the exploitation of the urban and rural landscape.