

Cultural Ecology Newsletter

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Editor: Simon Batterbury*

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Announcements

The Annals of the Association of American Geographers

The Annals of the Association of American Geographers is being re-designed, with changes taking effect in 2001 (volume 91). It will consist of four sections: Environmental Sciences; Methods, Models and Geographic Information Sciences; Nature and Society and People, Place, Region. Each section will have a separate editor working under an overall Managing and Production Editor. The editor for the Nature and Society subsection will be Roger Kasperson, Clark University. The CESG is delighted that lobbying by BL Turner II and others to re-instate the Nature and Society subsection was successful. The fear in 1999 was that the Annals would not have editors or sections that explicitly recognize human-environment scholarship. The re-visioning of the AAG's journals was, all admit, a drawn-out and sometimes contentious process.

American Association for the Advancement of Science meetings

All CESG members are invited to consider proposing sessions for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meetings. The meetings will be

held in San Francisco from February 15-20, in 2001. Kent Mathewson, who has been reappointed to a three-year term as the AAG representative to Section H (Anthropology) of the AAAS, is seeking suggestions or proposals for potential sessions. Preliminary proposals must be submitted by mid-March of 2000. Section representatives are responsible for promoting and assisting with the organization of sessions. Though the selection process is competitive, sessions focused on cultural ecological topics specifically, or people-environment themes more generally, stand a good chance of being chosen. It is hoped that several sessions will be in the initial planning stages by the end of this year. Please direct any or all inquiries or indications of interest to Kent Mathewson, Dept. of Geog. & Anthro., LSU, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, USA. Tel. 225-388-6073. Fax 225-388-4420. E-mail kentm@lsu.edu

Journal of Cultural Geography special issue

The Journal of Cultural Geography will publish a special issue devoted to cultural ecology. Dale Lightfoot and Kent Mathewson are the issue editors. The deadline for submission of articles is Sept. 15th 1999. The volume will be regionally balanced and oriented, with articles on topics from eight different geographical realms: The Americas, North, Middle, South; Oceania; Europe; Africa; East/Southeast Asia; and South/Central/Southwest Asia. The editors have submissions (received or promised) from all the above realms save for the last. Thus, they are particularly interested in one or more submissions on South, Central, or Southwest Asia. Please direct inquiries concerning the Europe-Africa-Asia component to Lightfoot (drlight@okway.okstate.edu) and The Americas-Oceania to Mathewson (kentm@lsu.edu).

National Security Education Program Fellowships

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) announces the 2000 National Security Education Program Graduate International Fellowships. Awards are made to support U.S. graduate students only in language study, overseas study, and limited home tuition costs. 'National Security' is interpreted broadly to include social and environmental concerns overseas. You incur an obligation to work for an agency or office of the federal government, or "in the field of higher education" upon completion. See the NSEP web site for details or phone 800 498 9360. Applications due Jan 15th, 2000.

Job at McGill

The Dept. of Geography at McGill University, Canada invites applications for a tenure-track position at the Assistant Professor level in Development Geography, beginning in September 1, 2000. Applicants must possess a PhD or expect to graduate by summer, 2000, have demonstrated research excellence and excellent teaching and communication skills. The successful candidate should have a strong grasp of development issues in relation to economy, society, politics and/or environment. He or she will be expected to teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels and to develop a productive research program, embracing graduate student supervision. There are excellent opportunities for collaboration within the department and with other units, including the Centre for Developing Areas Studies and the McGill School of Environment. Information on the Department of Geography can be found [here](#). Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is directed in the first instance to Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada. McGill University is committed to equity in employment. Candidates should ensure their curriculum vitae (including evidence of relevant formal training), statements of teaching specializations and research interests, up to three reprints and three confidential letters of recommendation are received before December 15, 1999 by: Dr Oliver Coomes, Chair, Search Committee, Department of Geography, McGill University, 805 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3A 2K6. phone: 514 398-4943, fax: 514 398-7437, email: coomes@felix.geog.mcgill.ca.

Annual Meetings: Pittsburgh, April 2000

Sessions to be presented at the Pittsburgh AAG meetings (4-8th April 2000) include a major retrospective session on the field of cultural and political ecology. Sessions include:

Reflections on Cultural/Political Ecology I: Paths Taken, Directions Forged. Organizer and Chair: Oliver Coomes, (McGill). Panellists: Billie Lee Turner (Clark), Mike Watts (Berkeley), Karl Butzer (Texas), Piers Blaikie (East Anglia). Discussant: Tony Bebbington (Colorado/World Bank).

Reflections on Cultural/Political Ecology II: Which Direction Now? Organizer and Chair: Paul Robbins, (Ohio State). Panellists are Simon Batterbury (LSE), Emily Young (U Arizona), Juanita Sundberg (U of British Columbia), Brad Jokisch (Ohio U), Paul Robbins (Ohio State U), Ken MacDonald (U of Iowa), Rheyne Laney (Sonoma State U).

Political ecologies and alternative developments I: Power, livelihoods, social capital. Organizers, Chairs: Tony Bebbington (Colorado/World Bank) and Raymond Bryant (King's, London). Discussant: to be confirmed.

Robin Mearns (the World Bank). Operationalizing political ecology: from frameworks to action.

Anthony Bebbington (Colorado/the World Bank), Christian Grootaert (the World Bank) and Thomas Carroll (George Washington). Social capital, rural poverty and the governance of local development.

Sarah J. Halvorson (Colorado). Gender and the Politics of Resource Access: Implications for Social Capital Formation in Northern Pakistan.

Dianne Rocheleau (Clark). Power lines, relational webs, and complex communities in three landscapes.

Political ecologies and alternative developments II: Social capital, cultural capital, moral capital. Organizers, Chairs: Tony Bebbington (Colorado/World Bank) and Raymond Bryant (King's, London). Discussant: Michael Watts (Berkeley)

Jeffrey T. Bury (Colorado). Beggars on a Golden Bench: International Gold Mining Operations and Changing Social Capital in the Peruvian Andes.

Raymond L. Bryant (King's, London). Moral Capital and the Empowerment of Non-governmental Organizations in the Philippines.

Thomas Perreault (Colorado). Understanding Social Capital: Social Mobilization, Cultural Meaning, and Place in The Ecuadorian Amazon.

Mixed Landscapes, Mixed Methods I. Organizer: Paul Robbins, (Ohio State).

Discussant - B. L. Turner (Clark). Speakers: Tom Bassett (Illinois), Rheyne Laney (Sonoma State), Tim Forsyth (IDS Sussex/Harvard), Emma Archer (Clark), Matt Turner (Wisconsin)

Mixed Landscapes, Mixed Methods II. Organizer : Paul Robbins, (Ohio State).

Discussant - Karl Zimmerer (Wisconsin). Speakers: Paul Robbins (Ohio State), Belinda Dodson (), Simon Batterbury (LSE), Kevin St. Martin (Clark).

Political environments in the developing world. Organizer: Gary Gaile (Colorado).

Speakers: Gary Gaile, Betsy Olsen, Adam Kloff, Brian H King (all at Colorado)

Meeting Reports

African Environments: Past and Present

Several CESG members and other geographers and anthropologists including Bill Adams, Reg Cline-Cole, Annika Dahlberg, Lesley Gray, David Hulme, Per Lindskog,

Fiona MacKenzie, Rod Neumann and Rick Schroeder attended a major international conference in the plush surroundings of St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, UK from 5th-8th July 1999. The well attended conference was convened by two well known environmental historians: William Beinart (Oxford) and Richard Grove of ANU, and Jo Ann McGregor of Reading University. The aim of the meeting was to challenge and develop a new agenda for a diverse field that is trying to understand environmental transformations in Africa. There was a strong emphasis on the historical disciplines, and particularly those working on issues in environmental history. Strangely, and perhaps reflecting current trends in research funding, many papers (about a third, by my count) dealt with issues of wildlife management and conservation issues. There was also a very strong delegate presence from Southern Africa, and less representation from other regions.

The conference raised several issues of wider relevance. Firstly, it is clear that environmental history is flourishing in Africa and in the study of Africa - the field is certainly not confined to its well-known north-American variants (as pioneered by Donald Worster, William Cronon et al). Secondly, African environmental history is now trying to build from its methodological roots in social-science analysis of oral histories and archival sources, with the participants showing considerable interest in new techniques for analyzing landscape change (including scientific methods and GIS) . Thirdly, William Beinart's plea to develop environmental histories that are more firmly based in local knowledge systems and African views, rather than developing attacks on ill-conceived or exploitative 'colonial science' and administration, attracted interest from the participants, although Terry Ranger felt 'bashing colonials' was still all too easy and too prevalent in their contributions. Fourthly, my view is that environmental history and geographical cultural/political ecology are coming closer together, and are illustrating theoretical and methodological convergence. This was notable in several papers, and again on several occasions in an intelligent and witty closing session that grouped together the reflections of Ravi Rajan (Santa Cruz), Terence Ranger (Oxford/Zimbabwe), Alan Isaacman (Minnesota) and Jane Carruthers (ANU). Fifthly, Africa's environmental transformations have been profound and disturbing, although several papers highlighted the positive effects of human land uses and stressed their complexity - thankfully, 'population pressure on resources' arguments were scarcely mentioned. Lastly....in many respects, geographers seemed well ahead of the 'new' environmental historians in the techniques they employ to analyze these changes for defined territorial units. Geographers tend not to "dance around scientific issues", as Ranger phrased it, and seem to have already embraced a methodological pluralism of the sort that some historians are now seeking (see item on LD&D issue below). Nonetheless, environmental historians show great sensitivity to the nuances of history, and dedication to detailed study that the broad-brush of the geographer may lack. This was

a fascinating meeting that took years of organization and had a strong African presence. Some of the more interesting contributions from a geographical perspective included:

- The legacy of 500 years of colonisation for West Africa (Per Lindskog, Linköping)
- Landscape(s) in Transition: An environmental history of a village in north-east Botswana (Annika Dahlberg, Natal)
- Searching for Common Ground: Reconstructing Landscape History in East Africa's Eastern Arc Mountains. (Christopher Conte, Utah State)
- The origins and expansion of Marakwet hill-furrow irrigation in the Kerio Valley, Kenya. An interpretation (Wilhelm Ostberg, National Museum of Ethnography, Sweden)
- What Kind of Intensification? Land use and agrarian change in SW Burkina Faso. (Lesley Gray & Michael Kevane, Santa Clara)
- Whose Drought? Rain, Crops and Farm Labour in the Nigerian Sahel (Bill Adams & Mike Mortimore, Cambridge)
- Conservation and Community: Hanging Narratives, Policies and Practices in African Conservation (Bill Adams & David Hulme, Cambridge/Manchester)
- Crying out in the wilderness. Records and observations of environmental change at the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania (Dan Brockington, Cambridge)
- Contested Ground: Colonial Narratives and the Kenyan Environment, 1920-1945 (Fiona MacKenzie, Carleton)
- Toward a Social and Environmental History of the Building of Cahora Bassa Dam, Mozambique (Allen Isaacman & Chris Sneddon, Minnesota)
- Engaruka: The Success and Abandonment of an Integrated Irrigation System, c15th -17th Centuries (John Sutton, British Institute in E Africa)
- In Search of Lyela Farmers: Past and present perceptions of the Forest in Burkina Faso (Sten Hagberg, Stockholm)

- Listening to the Iraqw Intensive Farming System, as Told by a Hill and its Inhabitants: A study of agricultural intensification in Tanzania (Lowe Borjeson, Stockholm)
- The Social Dynamics of Changing Use of Key Water Resources in African Drylands (Phil Woodhouse & David Hulme, Manchester and Henry Bernstein, SOAS)
- Disease, Development and Conservation: Changing Images of People and Place in Colonial Tanzania (Rod Neumann, Florida Intl. Univ.)
- Mapping the Maasai: Dilemmas of Counter-Mapping Community Resources in Tanzania (Dorothy Hodgson & Rick Schroeder, Rutgers)

Written papers were circulated by email, and may still be available from the organizers. The Journal of Southern African Studies and Environment & History will be publishing some papers from the conference.

Simon Batterbury

African Environments: Technology, Modeling, and Political Ecology

Same name, very different venue and purpose! A workshop hosted by two geographers, Garth Myers and Johannes Feddema, took place at the University of Kansas from 8-11 September 1999. The NSF-funded meeting was distinctive for at least two reasons. Firstly, the organizers performed a small miracle by assembling participants from places as diverse as Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Dakar, Stockholm and the UK, as well several US universities. Secondly, a real effort was made to explore the linkages between the emerging field of environmental modeling and GIS based research, with the type of political ecology that examines resource access, politics, and vulnerability. Bill Adams (Geography, Cambridge) explored these linkages in the plenary address, entitled "Rich Political Ecology: the definition, dynamics and control of nature in Sub-Saharan Africa". He argued that there are three questions that scholarly research on African environments tries to answer - "what is nature?", "what is happening to nature?", and "whose nature is it?". Cultural studies, discourse and literary theory, and ethnography have, on occasion, focused on the first of these. Political ecologists usually enter via the third question, in their diverse studies of gender, access, politics and conflict. In doing so, they may miss the second question or overlook it. Issues of dynamics and process are answered by those with technical and scientific expertise, often without sufficient understanding of the other two questions. Could these three questions, and the different intellectual contributions they have spawned, be linked?

The next day, nineteen presentations by the participants explored various aspects of their ongoing research in rural and urban Africa. The remainder of the meeting was spent understanding how to use the rapid advances in GIS technologies and environmental modeling to answer concrete research questions, and debating their applicability. For example, John Corbett (Texas A&M) demonstrated his Almanac characterization software, into which a range of useful datasets may be entered and displayed (even by total GIS novices!). Further impressive techniques for understanding climate and agricultural systems were demonstrated by J Feddema and Kevin Price (Kansas) and Philip Mwanakuzi (Clark). Such tools provide spatial and graphical displays of cultural-ecological variables at a variety of spatial and temporal scales, and could, in principle, be linked to social studies of resource access, land cover change, etc. 'Linking' these sorts of tools to regional and local political ecology was the key challenge to emerge for several researchers at the meeting. Nick Haan (Clark) has, perhaps, gone furthest down the road to integration, in his efforts to "socialize the pixel" in Malawi. His study used remote-sensing to first pinpoint vulnerable and stressed communities, in which detailed multi-method fieldwork was later carried out and new issues were revealed that the initial GIS could never have uncovered. Interesting work by David Bennett (Kansas) in the USA, focusses on the linkage between land use and economic decision-making. For some, making the intellectual leap between different research frameworks and forms of reasoning we listened to, proved hard. We were not starting from the same perspective, or, on occasion, even using the same language. Some qualitative political ecology could seem vague or even weak to those unfamiliar with its form or reasoning; similarly, the gross assumptions made in environmental modeling work seemed inappropriate to others. Clearly, GIS and GPS technologies are not politically neutral tools, however useful - and 'Blaikie-style' political ecology doesn't provide all the answers. For others, including several of the university participants from Africa, and two members of the Zanzibar government (M Muhajir and A Mizra), the workshop highlighted a different issue; the need to establish local IT capacity and training and to apply tools like GIS to pressing local problems. As Peter Kyem (Connecticut) phrased it in describing his own integrative studies of Ghanaian forest use, "Africa cannot afford to ignore GIS". Launching off from this last issue, outputs from this meeting include a proposal to provide academic linkages around IT and GIS technologies between Tanzania, Senegal and Kansas; A link between Kansas and Zambia has been secured. Further integrative research efforts involving some of the participants, particularly around understanding fragmented and multi-use landscapes and research support for biodiversity conservation, are planned, and NSF funding is being sought.

Rather than providing new theoretical avenues to explore political ecology in isolation, this productive meeting offered the participants a rare opportunity to think laterally about the benefits of 'technologizing' their work, to rethink how landscape

dynamics may be understood, and to ground these questions in the environments and societies of several African countries. Clearly, the tools available for studying African lands and peoples have changed remarkably over the last ten years, and many of these have a place in research and policy. For further information, contact Garth Myers via the workshop web site. - *Simon Batterbury*

Members' News

PLEC

The Project on People, Land Management and Environmental Change (UNU/PLEC) has been developed, since 1993, by the United Nations University (UNU). PLEC involves a collaborative effort among scientists from across the developing world. In March 1998 it received substantial funding from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF, managed by the World Bank). The project is executed by UNU through a network of five locally-based Clusters that have been established in West Africa (Ghana, and Guinea), East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), the Asia-Pacific (China, Thailand, and Papua New Guinea), and America (Brazil, Peru, Mexico and Jamaica). About 80 per cent of all participants are from these countries. Scientists from Australia, Japan, USA, and UK are also involved and Harold Brookfield of ANU, a previous CESG Netting Award winner, has been a driving force. The PLEC network uniquely provides both for South-to-South cooperation and South-to-North twinning arrangements.

The goal of the project is to develop sustainable and participatory approaches to conservation, especially of biodiversity, within small farmers' agricultural systems, and in participation with the farmers. The specific objectives are as follows:

- to establish historical and baseline comparative information on agrodiversity and biodiversity at the landscape level;
- to develop participatory and sustainable models of biodiversity management based on farmers' technologies and knowledge within agricultural systems at the community and small-area levels;
- to recommend approaches and policies for sustainable agrodiversity management to key government decision makers, farmers, and field practitioners; and
- to establish national and regional networks for capacity strengthening within participating institutions, and to carry forward the aims of PLEC.

The core of PLEC's work is in its 'demonstration site' villages. Here, PLEC becomes the farmers' own enterprise, and scientists are the facilitators, not the instructors. The scientists identify and demonstrate farmers' practices that are environmentally, socially and financially sustainable, and which sustain biodiversity. They help farmers in achieving their own conservationist goals. Collaborating farmers manage varied bio-physical conditions, growing a range of crops and using biodiversity with discretion. The project describes what they do as 'agrodiversity'. The PLEC approach differs from mainstream agricultural research at experiment stations under controlled conditions. By integrating locally developed knowledge of soils, climate, and other physical factors with scientific assessments of their quality in relation to crop production, a set of sustainable agricultural technologies can be devised so that agricultural diversity is maintained. The participatory process will eventually enhance farmers' and local communities' ability to adapt to environmental, social and economic change. For further details and to receive the PLEC Newsletter, contact Mike Stocking, University of East Anglia (m.stocking@uea.ac.uk), Harold Brookfield of the Australian National University (hbrook@coombs.anu.edu.au), or Liang Luohui of UNU (Liang@hq.unu.edu).

Mike Stocking

Environmental Histories, Access to Resources and Landscape Change

A special issue of *Land Degradation & Development* on "Environmental Histories, Access to Resources and Landscape Change" [10(4): 279-396, 1999] is based around papers presented at a session at the 1998 Boston AAG meetings. The papers arose from a conviction that 'resource use histories' help explain contemporary and past landscapes, and more sophistication is required in their analysis. The editors are Simon Batterbury and Tony Bebbington. Reprints are available from individual authors. Contents:

- Batterbury, Simon .P.J. & Antony.J. Bebbington. Environmental Histories, Access to Resources and Landscape Change: An Introduction. pp 279-288.
- Conte , Chris. "The Forest Becomes Desert". Forest use and environmental change in Tanzania's West Usambara Mountains. pp289-307.
- Naughton-Treves, Lisa. Whose Animals? A history of property rights to wildlife in Toro, western Uganda. pp309-326
- Gray, Lesley. C. Is Land Being Degraded? A multi-scale examination of landscape in southwestern Burkina Faso. pp327-341

- Turner, Matt. No Space for Participation: Pastoralist narratives and the etiology of park-herder conflict in Southwestern Niger. pp343-361
- Klooster, Dan. Community-based forestry in Mexico: can it reverse processes of forest degradation? pp363-379
- Endfield, Georgina H. & O'Hara, Sarah L. Perception or Deception: Land degradation in post-conquest Michoacan, west-central Mexico. pp381-396

The Authors:

Simon Batterbury, Development Studies, LSE. s.batterbury@lse.ac.uk

Tony Bebbington, Geography, Colorado. tonyb@rastror.colorado.edu

Chris Conte, History, Utah State University, cconte@cc.usu.edu

Lisa Naughton, Geography, Madison-Wisconsin, naughton@geography.wisc.edu

Lesley Gray, Environmental Studies, Santa Clara University,
lgray@demog.berkeley.edu

Matt Turner, Geography, Madison-Wisconsin, turner@geography.wisc.edu

Dan Klooster, Environment Institute, Princeton University, klooster@princeton.edu

Georgina Endfield & Sara O'Hara, Geography, Nottingham University,
endfield@geography.nottingham.ac.uk

Book Reviews

All CESG members, and others, are invited to submit reviews of books that would be of interest to our Specialty Group. Publishers are invited to send books to the Editor, and willing reviewers are sought.

Lund, Christian. 1998. Law, Power and Politics in Niger: Land struggles and the Rural Code. Hamburg: LIT Verlag and New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. 252pp. ISBN 3825834050. \$26.95/£15.

Reviewed by Simon Batterbury, London School of Economics

In this volume, Danish geographer Christian Lund, of Roskilde University, offers a new perspective on the reform of land tenure in West Africa. Lund's work has included several years spent in Hausa-speaking regions as a consultant and PhD student, and his paper delivered at the Boston AAG meetings in 1998 (and forthcoming in the journal *Africa*) was widely praised.

In Niger, the government wishes to introduce a Code Rural, that involves the setting up of local Tenure Commissions that will keep detailed land use records and issue certificates of land ownership. These will allow an individual to keep, sell or rent out land that he or she effectively 'owns'. The government hopes this will make access to land more secure and provide more opportunities for sustainable resource management and growth of the agricultural sector in Niger. As Lund explains, this process has run into difficulties; since the details of the Code Rural were first publicized several years ago, rural Nigeriens have rushed to provide evidence that they hold longstanding rights to certain parcels of land before the Code is implemented, leading to conflicts over 'who owns what'. Farmers fear their rights will be lost to others when the Code comes in, if they cannot show they own, or use, land productively. Thus, legal frameworks concerning land in Niger - or even the threat of change in legal frameworks - have major significance for resource access, and land use/cover.

Lund has examined many cases of land disputes in Hausa speaking areas near Zinder, making the book a rich source of information on the social and legal bargaining that has taken place behind the scenes since the Code was first proposed. Ethnographic and documentary accounts of several individual land disputes are his prime data source. The Code appears to favour the claims of the 'first occupants' to land, and those with existing 'ownership'; it does not favour the 'tiller' or tenant who is borrowing land or presently has an uncertain claim, although in reality everything hinges on the bargaining powers that the litigants can muster if a dispute is heard by the authorities. It is already common for cases brought before the complex network of political and legal authorities to involve fees and bribes, and the successful litigant usually has close knowledge of the political and legal process, and can thus command greater support for his claim. Lund has also examined cases where 'para-legal' documents and deeds to land are fabricated and ratified in rural areas, in the absence of any state-sanctioned procedure. These documents exist in-between the informal world of customary land rights sanctioned by traditional leaders, and the formal registration of land by the state.

Tenure disputes are an everyday occurrence in Niger - they went on long before the modern land reforms were proposed - but the threat of the Code seems to have

increased the number of cases brought up for settlement by 'official' government institutions. Disputes are unpredictable in nature, and the Code is unlikely to simplify matters since the 'traditional' rights it wishes to legalise are themselves very complex and often disputed. As of 1999 it has not been finally ratified in Niger, due in part to current political upheavals, but it may be in the near future. This book suggests that the formal registration process it proposes will not provide the security that land users are seeking. Lund, therefore, casts doubt of the policy of 'fixing' 'traditional' land rights with new legal measures.

Lund's description of the goings-on in the rural backwaters of Niger is not as obscure as it might seem - there are countless examples of similar conflicts between traditional, modern, and 'hybrid' systems of tenure across Africa. What makes the book interesting is that his theoretical framework is rooted in the literature on common property and institutions, and cuts across several broad areas of investigation. The empirical material is linked to legalistic theory and to wider debates over institutions and land access, building on the work of scholars including Sara Berry, Sally Falk Moore, Jean-Philippe Platteau and Etienne le Roy. The book is the first in a new series by APAD, a European organization that unifies scholars in Africa and Europe conducting anthropological investigations of development and social change. In sum, the book offers a scholarly and fresh perspective on land tenure and land law, and therefore has wide appeal: it will be an important resource for those struggling to understand, and to improve, access to land in Africa.