

Time Travel, Assegaibosch Manor House, Jonkershoek

Goal

To introduce the Time Travel method and Landscape Education.

To make the participants discover the landscape, not least the human impact, both in a destructive and a sustainable way, in the past and today.

To reflect on my own responsibility for a sustainable use of the landscape and a cohesive society.

Facts, early 1800s in the Cape Colony

The area of the Cape had for centuries belonged to groups of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists. They knew how to interact with the landscape, staying by the water streams, hunting the game, picking herbs and plants for medicine and food. The pastoralists also had sheep and cattle. The flora and fauna, trees and plants, were reproduced. When the European settlers came everything changed and with guns and power they took over the land. Gradually in the 18th century the frontier moved inland.

In the early 1800s Stellenbosch was not at the frontier anymore. It was an established town with farms and vineyards around. Farmers had slaves working for them, from Malay and East Asia, but also from Africa. The hunter-gatherers, san, and the pastoralists, khoi, had been more or less eradicated or chased further inland.

Commandos had been very active in these operations. Some khoi had fled up in the mountains, sometimes together with others, forming drosters gangs.

1806, the British took over the Cape Colony. They were also in war with France at that time.

1807, The slave trade in the British colonies was stopped. Slavery was abolished in the Cape Colony in 1834/38.

1809, Caledon Code, an important legislation to control the khoi workers. The khoi could not be bought or sold as slaves. No vagabonds were allowed, they had to have a pass. They were employed under contract with wages and could complain for ill treatment. Children of the khoi workers had to stay on the farm until they were 20 or 25 years old. Some khoi moved to the new mission stations.

Early 1800s was a boom for the farmers and farm products and a boost in the wine industry. One reason was that Britain could not buy products from France, since they were at war.

The landscape close to Cape Town changed considerably during the 18th century. The settlers cut down trees for timber, furniture and fire wood. The forest was cleared quite fast. Game reduced, less medicine and edible plants. This created problems for the san and khoi way of life. Wood and timber were also desperately needed by the settlers for houses, ships and for barrels in the growing wine industry. The white farmers started to plant trees they knew from Europe, primarily oak and pine.

Jonkershoek had (and still has) the highest rainfall in southern Africa, 1100 mm per year. Deforesting resulted in flooding some parts of the year and risk for droughts other parts of the year. The expanding wine farms had a need for water and irrigation systems. Jonkershoek was part of a larger water catchment area, which meant that they affected the water supply further downstream.

All in all, a period of huge social differences.

Assegaiibosch farm

About 1693 Simon van der Stel granted a small piece of arable land in Jan-Jonkers Hoek under the Grootte Berg, named Assagaij Bushto Dirk Coetzee. Coetzee lived at his main farm, Coetzenburg, and agricultural use of Assegaiibosch was probably marginal -- perhaps spring pasturage, with kraals to protect the sheep at night and rudimentary shelter for a shepherd. In 1725 his son Gerrit Coetzee inherited the farm. In 1755 Coetzee sold the land, but no buildings, to Pieter Wium, who may have wanted it as a holding ranch for cattle and sheep. One can speculate that Wium may have built a house, later used as an outbuilding. During a time of economic prosperity, in 1792 the farm was sold to Paul Johan Hartog and Lambert Hendrik Fick, who soon acquired Hartog's half-share. Fick probably built the house still standing. Wouter Eduard Wium, grandson of the prior owner, bought the farm in 1806 from his wife's uncle, LH Fick. In 1817 he was granted considerable land around the old holding increasing the size from 6½ morgen to 170 morgen. The same year Wium received a perpetual quit rent by the Governor Lord Charles Somerset with the specific proviso that Wium should plant oak trees. Later around 1825 Wium may have extended his house and added pointed gables to an existing H shaped house and also probably inserted the Georgian windows and doors. He was married to Magdalena Fick and had ten children.

Scenario, New Development in the valley of Jonkershoek 1817

Life in the Stellenbosch area has changed considerably the last hundred years. The land that belonged to the san and khoi, now belongs to white farmers. The trees on the fields and the fynbos vegetation have decreased and the area is almost deforested. Slaves from far away countries are brought in to work on the farms. The social differences are huge.

But for the farmers, life in early 1800s in the Jonkershoek valley is becoming better and better. New vineyards are built, the farms extend, there are enough workers and businesses are going quite well. For the khoi people it is the opposite. They have lost their land and the deforesting means less game to hunt and more difficult to find medicinal and edible plants. And the water supply has become more unpredictably, more flooding and periods of long droughts.

The lack of forest is a problem also for the farmers. They greatly need the timber for buildings, furniture, wine barrels and ships.

Wouter Eduard Wium is a busy person. He bought the Assegaiibosch farm eleven years ago and has been struggling with his farm. For a long time he has wanted to increase the land and built new vineyards. After long negotiations it seems that the solution is here. More land and less tax in exchange for planting trees, oak and pine. It seems like a good deal. And new vineyards mean a need for more water, but that could be sorted with irrigation. He realizes that no new slaves in the Cape will create problems for him. But the new law for the khoi will hopefully give a solid work force on the farm.

The khoi on the farm are instead dreaming for an independent life as in the past. The slaves eagerly want to be free and maybe even have their own farm. Is it time for actions now?

Wium has called both permanent and temporary workers today. Time is demanding actions and a larger farm needs more workers. But the situation is a little bit tense. Maybe the slaves and the khoi have other ideas than Wium how to develop the landscape and the society for the future?

Roles

Half of the participants are Khoi people, contract workers at Assegaaibosch, the other half are slaves at Assegaaibosch farm

Khoi chief and warrior

Wouter Eduard Wium, wife Magdalena and family, sisters Hendrina, Johanna

Foreman, bywoner

Key Questions

Sustainable landscape, sustainable society

- How do the local changes in the landscape affect the fauna, flora, water resources, climate etc? How does it affect the people in the valley? The khoi? The slaves? The farmers?
- What is my plan for a sustainable landscape/ sustainable living in the Jonkershoek valley?
- Do I accept these huge difference in society? What will I do to decrease the gap and create a more cohesive society?

Activities

- Collect acorns and plant seeds
Fetch water, calculate the amount of water needed (lead by a settler from the farm)
- Outline the new vineyard, make a map of the farmhouses, water streams and vineyard (led by a bywoner)
- Collect plants for medicine and eating, use them, make illustrations (led by a khoi)
- Make spears from assegaaibosch trees, use them (led by a khoi)
- Cut fruit
- Singing, dancing

Time plan

13.00 Welcome, presentations, introduction,

Scenario, characters, dress up

13.30 Initiation, Activities and discussions (each one do two activities)

14.30 Presentations of the development plans of the farm, fruit

Incidents with khoi workers (with slaves)

Dancing

15.00 Ending

Reflection

15.30 Learners leave

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Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar läns museum, Linus Karlsson, Kalmar

Clint Windvogel, Sunet Basson, Trevor Farr, Cape Nature