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Transdisciplinary Potentials of Spectral Landscapes: Bridging Space, Memory, and Language

► **Time and place:** 23-25 May, Villa Källhagen
Djurgårdsbrunnsvägen 10, 115 27 Stockholm

Day 1: Thursday, 23 May

09:30 Arrival & Coffee

10:00 **Opening by Caroline Kerfoot & Natalia Volvach**
Stockholm University

10:05 **Keynote by Yael Navaro “Catastrophe and More-than-Human Worlds”**
University of Cambridge (Online)

11:30 Coffee break

Panel 1: Body, memory, self: Auto-ethnographic reflections and experiments

12:00 Jackie Jia Lou: “Reassembling landscapes: An autoethnographic reflection on three creative projects”
Birkbeck, University of London

12:20 Natalia Volvach: “Sensing your way through the fieldwork spaces: Ghost auto-ethnography in occupied Crimea”
Stockholm University

12:40 Discussion by Maria Tumarkin
The University of Melbourne

13:00 Lunch

Panel 2: Ghosts, voids, voices: Ethics and politics in re-concepting the world

14:30 Luke Holmes: "Languaging as sirening: Pre-emptive listening and the ethical event"
University of the West of Scotland (Online)

14:50 Sean Smith: "The spectral life of infrastructure: Vibrant pasts and future hauntings in tourism landscapes of the Arabian Gulf"
Tilburg University

15:10 Discussion by Ana Deumert
University of Cape Town (Online)

15:45 Coffee break

Panel 3: Making absences present: Uncovering the invisible

16:00 Pia Lane: "Layers of silence in language revitalisation and reclamation"
University of Oslo

16:20 Vera Santomé Juncal: "Historical silencing: Orders of (in)visibility of Francoist repression in the linguistic landscape of Moaña"
Autonomous University of Madrid

16:40 Discussion by Mieke Vandembroucke
University of Antwerp

18:30 Dinner

Day 2: Friday, 24 May

09:30 **Keynote by Maria Tumarkin "The ghost shuffle"**
The University of Melbourne

11:00 Coffee break

Panel 4: Memories and landscapes as absent presences

11:30 David Kroik: "(In)visible presences and (dis)continuities in a colonized Saami linguistic landscape"
Nord University

11:50 Danielle Drozdzewski: "Locating memory in(to) place: Stolpersteine as an absent present".
Stockholm University

12:10 Discussion by Thomas Van de Putte
King's College London

12:30 Lunch

Panel 5: More-than-human encounters

14:00 Lara Krause-Alzaidi & Irene Brunotti: "Beyond metaphors and/of ghosts: Matterphorics of un/racializing voids in Zanzibar's material-discursive landscapes"
Leipzig University (Online)

14:20 Maida Kosatica: "Spectral encounters in the landscapes of Anthropocene: Coal-digging monsters, "nature" restoration and the ignorant gaze"
University of Duisburg-Essen (Online)

14:40 Clara Keating “Interaction, intra-action and diatopic hermeneutics: crossing a sociomaterial and a decolonial angle to conditions of hearability.”
University of Coimbra (Online)

15:00 Discussion by Alan Carneiro
The Federal University of São Paulo (Online)

15:45 Coffee break

Panel 6: Haunting absences

16:30 Sibonile Mpendukana: “Discourses of displacement and dispossession: an analysis of semiotic tools as forms of appraisal for the post 1994 South Africa in the student protests of 2016”.
University of Cape Town (Online)

16:50 Aida Thaqi Gashi, (Mieke Vandenbroucke & Uranela Demaj): “Women rights’ activist tackling of absence in Kosovar society: Reflections on practice and research”
University of Antwerp (Online)

17:10 Discussion by Sean Smith
Tilburg University

17:30 Walk and talk

19:00 Dinner

Day 3: Saturday, 25 May

Panel 7: Sociolinguistics meets Memory Studies

09:30 Ben Rampton and Thomas Van de Putte: "Hauntology, Sociolinguistics, and Memory Studies"

King's College London

09:50 Luisa Martin Rojo: "Tracing Francoist Necropolitics in Madrid's Landscape"

Autonomous University of Madrid

10:10 Discussion by Tommaso Milani

Pennsylvania State University

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 **Closing discussion by Caroline Kerfoot**

Stockholm University

11:10 Concluding remarks: Discussing ways forward, together.

12:00 Lunch

Keynote speakers (in chronological order)

Yael Navaro

**“Catastrophe and More-than-Human Worlds”
University of Cambridge (Online)**

The abstract is available upon request.

Maria Tumarkin

**“The ghost shuffle”
The University of Melbourne**

In this talk I'd like to draw on a method of the late Ross Gibson as described by his partner and collaborator Kathryn Bird and lifelong friend and collaborator Adrian Martin: Ross would have a bunch of index cards with different ideas and imagistic impressions on them, he would move them around, pick up some, start thinking out loud to show a thought being made in real time (made always out of connections) then turn to others in the room and say – ‘Now hold *that* in your head and try to network it with *this*.’

This method gives connection-making a hot improvisational quality, something different to what we might call ‘theorising’ which seeks if not always permanence of conceptual alignments then at least stickiness and durability. Not connecting the dots then, if we follow Gibson, more like keeping balls in the air.

The resulting heightening of senses (it's only a matter of time till the balls fall), eyes and hands working in concert with each other, the letting go (overthink and it's over), the embracing of transience and chance, the high possibility of being wrongfooted or not ready for whatever might come all seem right in approaching spectral landscapes or haunted places or what I used to call traumascapes but feel increasingly reluctant to do so for reasons I'll speak about in this talk.

What's on my ‘index cards’? Haunting as a social force (Gordon), an ontological fact (Derrida) and an epistemic position (Sharpe). Thinking *with* places – entering hauntedness through the physical, material places as well anchoring enquiries into time, memory and language in the lived experiences of place. Deborah Bird Rose's inspired work with the idea of ‘reciprocal capture’ which originally comes from philosopher Isabelle Stenger. Karen Barad's concept of hauntological materialism. Quarter of a century of my thinking about traumascapes. What's on the ‘cards’ is also what you'll bring to our conversation.

Connection-making of this kind is not a way of extracting oneself from or sidestepping intergenerational and multispecies webs of responsibility. I'll have much more to say about it when we meet.

Paper presenters (in chronological order)

Jackie Jia Lou

“Reassembling landscapes: An autoethnographic reflection on three creative projects”

Birkbeck, University of London

This paper presents a critical self-reflection on three creative projects in which linguistic or semiotic landscapes were deconstructed and reassembled. The first project 'Limehouse Cut' (in collaboration with a historian neighbour) was created at the height of the pandemic in the UK, where we photographed public signage related to Covid-19 on our daily walks, which I then cut into words and rearranged as collage poems written during the quiet hours of the lockdown. The second project, created for a community photography workshop, superimposed historical photos of Limehouse (historical Chinese settlement in London) upon contemporary images of the local area to explore the convergence of collective and individual migration trajectories. The third project, an interactive installation presented at the 14th Linguistic Landscape Workshop in Madrid, recreated a PCR booth, once a ubiquitous part of urban China during Covid-19, to invite participants to reflect on the relationship between memory and trauma. Although created separately and spontaneously at different moments over the past three years, it was only in retrospect that I, as a researcher, began to notice the interconnections between these three personal projects which I, as an ordinary, transnational migrant, created during the global pandemic first in London and then in Shanghai. They enabled me to navigate the precarious landscapes of a global crisis, to find an anchor in the chasm between historical turbulences, and to preserve personal memories in defiance of the erasure of collective trauma. In this sense, this paper hopes to contribute to emerging conversations in applied linguistics regarding autoethnography, memories, and creative arts.

Natalia Volvach

“Sensing your way through the fieldwork spaces: Ghost auto-ethnography in occupied Crimea”

Stockholm University

In studies of semiotic landscapes and sociolinguistics more generally, current methods fall short of grasping the complexity and unpredictability of social life, thus necessitating methodological innovation. This paper addresses this challenge by introducing a ghost auto-ethnography. This approach, while particularly relevant in restrictive and nondemocratic spaces, can also be effectively applied in other settings where certain voices, languages, and people have been missing, erased, or absented. When attempting to study the phenomena that appear to be “lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes” – phenomena that can be defined as ghosts (Gordon, 2008: 8), the researcher’s body may serve as a productive entry point. While negative methodologies have been developed (Navaro, 2020) and

several auto-ethnographic studies have aimed to capture the tension between the researcher and their lived space (Lefebvre 1991), the researchers' gut feelings of the fieldwork spaces have remained largely unexplored (but see Stroud, Peck & Williams, 2019). This paper chooses to fill this gap and centres the researcher's body that registers appearances as it engages with the absenced semiotic landscapes of the occupied Crimea. By doing so, it also engages in a ghost auto-ethnography through reflecting and unpacking the affects, memories, and experiences evoked by the encounters with absent presences in their material and discursive modes.

In sum, the paper argues that by taking the matters of the researcher's body more seriously, involving not only discussing positionality and self-reflexivity but also considering how our bodies mediate some voices (but not others) when engaging with the "vibrant afterlives of erased landscapes inhabited by ghosts" (Volvach, 2023: 63), we come closer to comprehending the mechanics of power and violence piercing the spaces we inhabit and navigate. In particular, by attending to the affective impact of absenced semiotic landscapes upon my body, I show how we may come closer to better comprehending the ideological production of space and its affective dimensions.

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Luke Holmes

**"Languaging as sirening: Pre-emptive listening and the ethical event"
University of the West of Scotland (Online)**

This paper aims to ground the character of the 'ethical event' for an ethical and political sociolinguistics of potentiality through a discussion of its siren-like urgency. In the context of an internationalising university classroom, it focuses on the dreadful, yet anticipatory sonic and textual qualities of interactions in which the voices of those usually on the margins come to be heard. Engaging multidisciplinary and multimodal texts surrounding our responsibility to both our past and possible future, the paper asks how we can learn from those voices whose languaging practices are pushed into the affective, ethical, and socio-political role of sirening. Drawing from a linguistic ethnographic study of a highly diverse postgraduate social sciences course, it explores teacher, student, and researcher responses that speak to and amplify sociolinguistic difference and trauma (McNamara 2020). It uses audio recordings, interviews, and fieldnotes, together with sounds and visuals taken from/inspired by artist and film

maker Aura Satz's *Pre-Emptive Listening* (2024), to exemplify the languaging practices in which actors take and call for collective responsibility in relation to our collective past and future. It shows how the languaging practices that most powerfully cause alarm and reorient our future listening, are those that disrupt the metaphysics of presence that currently characterises the quotidian understanding of ethics in the socially engaged language sciences. I conclude by suggesting that to ground our research, policy, and politics in a radical ethics of responsibility (see esp. Levinas 1981, Derrida 2001), is to give voice to the sirening laments of, and cautions to extreme violence, social inequality and injustice found in our contemporary soundscape.

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Sean Smith

“The spectral life of infrastructure: Vibrant pasts and future hauntings in tourism landscapes of the Arabian Gulf”
Tilburg University

Few regions of the world have been so profoundly changed in the past few decades as the Arabian Gulf, where the extraction of oil has spurred unprecedented urbanization and infrastructural linkages with remote regions. Yet as the ‘end of oil’ draws nearer and interest in alternative energy grows, Gulf governments are now investing in tourism as a cornerstone of post-oil economic planning. While serving as foundations for states and capitalist economies, infrastructures are also ‘concrete semiotic and aesthetic vehicles’ (Larkin, 2013, p. 329) which produce space and the experience of time (Anand et al., 2018). Drawing on interviews, online content analysis, and field observation, this paper investigates how new infrastructures in Oman and Saudi Arabia produce tourism landscapes, spaces which are ambivalently entangled with the past and future. While new roads and the construction of hotels and services in the Gulf enact a state-sanctioned ‘future imaginary’ (Pasternak et al., 2023, p. 3) of post-oil prosperity and global recognition, for many local residents such infrastructure is experienced as the present or future loss of human and non-human lifeways. Two infrastructural events provide case studies: in the first, the ongoing development of luxury tourism projects along the coastline near Oman’s capital produces spaces haunted by negated ‘counter-futures’ (Deumert, 2022, p. 139), as residents affectively speculate about lifeways that could have been even as they dread the almost certain closure of coastline that can still be publicly accessed. Then, the fencing of a nature preserve in Saudi Arabia has prevented residents from grazing and otherwise using the land, yet the infrastructural barrier is welcomed by tourism professionals and ecologists as restoring a lush desert ecosystem that could only previously be

experienced as a 'vibrant void' (Volvach, 2022, p. 6). These spectral interactions with developing tourism landscapes suggest that semiotic landscape scholarship may account for infrastructure as both material and sign, producing spaces interwoven with the past and haunted by the future.

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Pia Lane
"Layers of silence in language revitalisation and reclamation"
University of Oslo

Language revitalisation is imbued with tensions, and while it often is emancipatory, reclaiming a language can be a painful, silencing experience. Processes of colonization have led to epistemological absences (Santos 2012), which may be conceptualised as manifestations of silence. Understanding how and why silences come about and linger today is important for overcoming challenges those engaging in language reclamation may face. Therefore, paying attention to silences and emotional aspects of language reclamation is important. In this presentation, I will address three types of silences. The first is silencing by the nation state in the form of oppressive policies contributing to language shift. The effects of such policies may linger in two other types of silencing, this time from within the community. Older or traditional speakers of the Indigenous language may silence new speakers by assuming the role of "language police". This silencing may be understood as a consequence of colonialism, as traditional Indigenous speakers have internalised colonial ideologies of linguistic purity and hierarchies of authenticity and Indigeneity. New speakers may feel intimidated by the language police, leading to a sense of intimidation and fear of speaking, which in turn leads to a third and deeply emotional form of silencing, namely self-silencing (Lane 2023).

In order to explore such inherent tensions of Indigenous language revitalisation, I investigate lived experiences of language reclamation, focusing on emotions and silences in reclamation processes of Sámi in Northern Norway. European nation states colonised not only in the global South, but also 'at home'. Thus, the South, in the form of silenced and marginalised populations, also exists in the global North (Santos 2012). Drawing on perspectives from Southern Theory and Gordon's (2017) sociology of haunting, I investigate silences, emotions and tensions in language reclamation to shed

light on how our colonial past may re-emerge in processes of language reclamation. Language reclamation may be an emotional struggle, but this can also be a decolonising effort (Leonard 2017), paving the way for new futures.

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Vera Santomé Juncal
“Historical silencing: Orders of (in)visibility of Francoist repression in the linguistic landscape of Moaña”
Autonomous University of Madrid

We delve into the linguistic landscape of Moaña (Galicia) and how it silences the Francoist repression. In our methodology, we combine linguistic landscape analysis of two case studies with ethnographic interviews to people who experienced the dictatorship and engaged with the landscape. To do so, we analyse a plaque which is an act of memorization in the town centre (Guissemo, 2018) and another one which reflects a vibrant void in the retiree's club, intrinsically linked to a partial chronotope (Blommaert and De Fina, 2016) and chronopolitics (Divita, 2023). It was built as a trade union headquarter and would be turned into a centre for political torture during the Francoist dictatorship. In this way, in the semiotic landscape, we can observe the apparently common sense of historical silencing (Kerfoot and Hyltenstam, 2017) and erasure (Guissemo, 2018). Finally, we collect subjective experiences of subjects in relation to this linguistic landscape through ethnographic interviews, and we analyse how they rationalize experiences regarding collective memory (Ricoeur, 2000) and the reorientation of our gaze they propose (Volvach, 2022).

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David Kroik
“(In)visible presences and (dis)continuities in a colonized Saami linguistic landscape”
Nord University

In the colonized Saepmie in Sweden, an imagined periphery, Swedish national assimilatory policies suppressed the South Saami language. Although South Saami has held official status as a minority language in Sweden for over 20 years, Kroik et al. (Forthcoming) show that in the Semiotic Landscape (SL), discourses related to Indigenous Saami epistemologies clash with ones related to settler-colonialism. This case shares similarities with others postcolonial contexts, in which “coloniality and its violence” (Deumert, 2022, p. 136) haunt the contemporary moment.

Against this backdrop, I aim to investigate the SL of the settler-colonial village where I grew up: Borgafjäll, in the southern part of Saepmie. As a Saami person and as a learner, speaker and advocate for the South Saami language, I employ my lived experiences and my ways of seeing, being in and sensing the nearly invisible Saami spaces in the settler-colonial landscape. I explore hauntings (Dankertsen, 2022), i.e. how also Saami non-living socio-temporally evasive entities as stance takers affect my emotions and my perception of the SL. I also investigate how material ethnography tease out how monolingual signs create voids and absences that speak of lost futures that could have been. Moreover, guided by the concept of Indigenous efflorescence (Roche et al., 2018), I look into how South Saami emerges anew as linguistic rights codified as language policy, acts of decoloniality performed by living practitioners of Indigenous efflorescence and a sacred Saami *gievrie* [drum] (a non-living stance taker) co-conspire to “reclaim the settler colonial space” (Kroik et al., Forthcoming, p 4) and envisage a future for the language and its speakers.

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Danielle Drozdowski
“Locating memory in(to) place: Stolpersteine as an absent present”
Stockholm University

The stolpersteine (stumbling stones) are small bronze plaques embedded in the pavements of many German cities (and also around Europe) – they are a purposefully implicit part of the everyday streetscape. Each stone recalls the fate of one person under Fascism; locating this individual history at the location of their last known residence in the city. Gunter Demnig, the artist who instigated the project in 1993, cites the Talmud when outlining his motivation for this project, saying that "a person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten". The nation is of course present in the memory setting but the individual is foregrounded in a narrative that highlights how memories of war are always about location and dislocation.

The stolpersteine spatialise remembrance and affix it to the places named in the stones – they create presence from an event of absence by locating the memory of a person to place – to their last known residence in the city. But they also denote absence and dislocation; from that last place of residence dislocation ensued, commonly to another place, one of suffering and/or of death. The Stolpersteine reproduce memories of World War Two by emphasizing a shared geography of the viewer, in the present, and the person(s) being removed from their home(s).

This paper draws from research conducted in Mitte, Berlin, in three streets with multiple stolpersteine. The research sought to observe how the design and spatial orientation of the stones affects their interpretation as sites of memory. Using a combination of participant observation, videography and vox pop interviews, I have examined how the stones ‘exist’ as part of an already heavily memorialised landscape where they are often unnoticed, stepped on, stepped over, or dirtied by a constant stream of foot traffic. The Berliners interviewed in this study, identified the small-scale, community-led, and individualised aspects of the stolpersteine project as giving these examples of memory a distinct place in the heritage landscape.

Lara Krause-Alzaidi & Irene Brunotti
“Beyond metaphors and/of ghosts: Matterphorics of un/racializing voids in Zanzibar’s material-discursive landscapes”
Leipzig University (Online)

The House of Wonders (HoW) in Zanzibar was racialized urban matter, built under the command of ‘Arab’ bodies, then bombed and rebuilt by white British colonialists. In 2020, under the ‘African’ party (which had also led the violent revolution against Arab and British domination in 1964), the HoW collapsed. Here, we attend to the void left by this collapse, in the middle of recurring political violence against some-bodies in Zanzibar. We center Zanzibari reactions to the HoW’s collapse – videos of the void, eulogies mourning the house, interviews with Zanzibari intellectuals and Irene’s personal communication with friends and relatives – which relate to, and co-constitute, (racializing) political debates around the fallen house. Analytically, we

decide against a recent move in sociolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies to use spectrality and ghosts as concepts to speak about absent presences (Deumert 2022; Volvach 2023). Helped by African Studies and its interdisciplinary concern with the multivocal forms of African indigenous knowledges as “ways of making sense of the world, including making sense of Europe” (Macamo 2018: 5), we attempt to open up a space for debate around the potentials and limitations of these spectral notions in sociolinguistics. In Zanzibar, ghosts are present beings sharing lived space with humans. Ghosts are not spatio-temporally evasive figures animating a space of past and absenced realities (as they may well be in other research contexts). Wanting to become response-able (Haraway 2016) towards relational Swahili onto-epistemologies, we share Deumert’s (2022) concern that concepts of spectrality can sometimes distance us too far from any suggestion that we might actually believe in the reality of ghosts. Therefore, to analyze the absent presence of the HoW in Zanzibar’s material-discursive landscape, we turn to the matterphorical (Gandorfer forthcoming) void, a concept that thinks apparent absence as “a desiring orientation towards being/becoming” (Barad 2019: 529), co-constituted by shifting (i.e. phoric) matter that never settles but remains open for constituting ever new relationalities. Thinking and writing with the void allows us to show how the absent presence of the HoW can produce different un/racializing dynamics that are ongoing and open, holding indeterminate potentialities for healing the Zanzibari wound of race and/or for inflicting more pain.

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Maida Kosatica

**“Spectral encounters in the landscapes of Anthropocene: Coal-digging monsters,
“nature” restoration and the ignorant gaze”
University of Duisburg-Essen (Online)**

Tagebau Hambach, the world’s largest opencast lignite mine siting at the site of the ancient Hambach Forest, Germany, provides a unique representation of an Anthropocene landscape. Essentially associated with one of the dirtiest forms of energy (Braunbeck, 2021), the open pit/strip coal mining operation obliterates the entire ecosystem. The degree of destruction by coal mining “exceeds our language” (Anders, 2019) as many still misrecognize the true extent of devastation. However, Tagebau

Hambach serves as a leisure site for visitors and mirrors the typical tourist behaviour of spectating and practicing outdoor recreational activities. It's observation deck (the so called *Aussichtspunkt Terra Nova 1*) sustaining the destruction-rehabilitation nexus, distinctively requests a gaze at the largest man-made hole in the world – 411 meters deep and 44 square kilometres large. Despite the 14,200 tonnes bucket wheel excavator devouring rock and soil before one's eyes, signifiers of idealized beachscape – beach chairs, umbrellas and boardwalks – normalize the long-term devastating impact on the environment. After all, “mining is becoming part of green economy” as Germany's biggest power company, RWE, discursively legitimizes coal mining (Brock, 2023). With habitat multimodally disappearing and post-mining land being rehabilitated, the ghosts of Hambach Forest are awoken in the spectral landscape haunted by old, dirty and cheap ways of living. To address the absences of life itself, in this talk I unpack a selection of images that expose “the weirdness” (Morton, 2013) of Tagebau Hambach.

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Clara Keating

“Interaction, intra-action and diatopic hermeneutics: crossing a sociomaterial and a decolonial angle to conditions of hearability”

University of Coimbra (Online)

This paper draws on previous and ongoing projects based on biographical approaches to language and migration that aimed at exploring the lived experiences with language and literacy by speakers with ongoing or inherited migrant background. Hosted in a research centre with a long tradition of developing interdisciplinary work from the angle of southern epistemologies, intercultural translation and the sociology of absences and emergences, yet working in the ‘linguistics’ and ‘sociolinguistics’ room next door, I have been inspired by a need to create critical reflexivity, disentangle ontologies and modes of researching multilingual and multisemiotic practices and repertoires in contexts of mobility and migration. This is an exercise that aims at making explicit the blind spots, the absences and the not yet said, as well as the internal coloniality of the modes of production of knowledge about language and repertoire that configure even the most progressive sociolinguistic work (Keating, 2020).

The biographization work with migrants has impelled me to explore in detail some aspects and limitations of the research apparatus used in our research – its design, the collaborative activities that acted upon the construction, not only of the speaking

spaces for participants, but also of the situated conditions of hearability. Lived experience of migration happens in radically situated bordered zones, where bodies, objects, communicative repertoires seem to live side by side, between subjects that, not only do not share the same subjectivization trajectories, they act upon the world mediated by overlapping, coexisting and multiscalar material traces of time, space, territoriality, habitus and lifeworlds, among other aspects. In my work I have been assuming migration and mobility as a Deleuzian metaphor for the fluid dynamics of language, repertoire and semiotic activity, and borders as the method for tapping into those multilayered elements that clash and become constraints and obstacles, which are forged and materialized as speakers navigate communicative practices for their own survival and agency. Two concepts have been useful in this process.

One, the angle of agential realism as proposed by Karen Barad was useful, as it brought to the fore the impossibility of separating ethics, ontologies and epistemologies: “the thing” “we” research is enacted in the entangled “ways in which” research is being done, as “we are part of the world in its differential becoming” (Barad, 2007). Rather than focusing on the interaction between preceding entities (such as pre-conceived speakers or participants in events), a focus on the intra-action of human and non human actors opened space for the emergence of certain phenomena (e.g. becoming a speaker or a participant), and by tracing the emergent instances, tap into possible absences and silences. I draw on previous work and illustrate here how the sociomaterial focus on how objects made people happen (Kell, 2012) across the timeline of one of the research projects was helpful in following, step by step, the cohabitation of rival versions of one same narrative (Keating, 2019).

As our identities as institutional and academic actors play a powerful role in the process of constructing knowledge, there was the need to exercise what Santos and colleagues (inspired by authors like Pannikar) have called diatopic hermeneutics (the dynamics of ‘hearing and saying’, yet simultaneously ‘hearing and saying otherwise’ from multiple other angles not yet named, Santos, 2018, Ribeiro, 2004). To illustrate this, I draw on the in-depth interviews with two multilingual students from countries with Portuguese as an official language, to illustrate how a focus on the repeated verbalisation of their success in speaking European Portuguese in the interviews, among other conversational strategies, pointed at the experience, not only of silencing other varieties of Portuguese and local African languages, but also of desiring other circumstances for this named repertoire. There was a tension between said, silenced and desired experience, which emerged out of the interviews, and further recognised by participants.

I end the paper by stating the need to explore in more depth an explicit focus on the conditions of hearability.

Sibonile Mpendukana

“Discourses of displacement and dispossession: an analysis of semiotic tools as forms of appraisal for the post 1994 South Africa in the student protests of 2016”

University of Cape Town (Online)

This paper assumes a semiotic approach to the understanding of student protests to analyse the multisemiotic and multilingual resources deployed by protesting students at UCT in 2016 (Mpendukana and Stroud 2018; Aboelezz 2016; Kistis and Milani 2015). It draws on the notion ‘illicit appearance’ (Gordon 2015) and Frantz Fanon’s idea of “the zone of non-being” (Fanon 1952) to anchor the critical discourses of students against UCT as an institution and against South Africa as a country where social transformation has been slow. Through the notion of Linguistic Citizenship (Stroud 2001) as a decolonial lens, and as a means to account for a myriad of communication tools – linguistic, semiotic materials and the body - as language in the broad sense, the paper weaves together Fanon and Linguistic Citizenship to grapple with the chronotopic links that time, space and bodies have with the past and the present in South Africa. It delves into the politicization of memory and the idea of being ‘haunted’ to show how students deployed multiple resources to bring the past to the present. In this work, the idea of hauntology concerns “the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost[apartheid] as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive” (Davis 2005: 373). This brings to the fore why zombie landscapes “the ‘undead’ and highly racialized ways of speaking about space and place” (Stroud and Bock 2019) must be reckoned with.

Aida Thaqi Gash, Mieke Vandenbroucke & Urela Demaj

“Women rights’ activist tackling of absence in Kosovar society: Reflections on practice and research”

University of Antwerp (Online)

The Constitution of Kosovo, a country in the Western Balkan, in principle reflects the main tenets of a modern-day, democratic society with laws that are designed to promote and ensure gender equality in all aspects of life. However, the increasing number of femicide and gender-based violence the country has experienced in recent years evidently reveals a different, more nuanced reality. In part due to the longstanding rules of the Code of Lekë Dukagjini (otherwise known as Code of the Mountains), a set of orally transmitted customary laws with traditional patriarchal values which directs Albanian society and became influential again in the 1990s, Kosovo’s society continues to function more favorably for men than women, rendering women and women’s issues up until recent years largely absent from the public sphere while violence against women continues to increase. After the war with Serbia, Kosovo’s nation building attempts initially focused less on women’s issues and women’s needs were rarely brought to public attention in spite of the important role women have played in Kosovo’s political arena, both during and after the inter-ethnic conflict. As a consequence, post-independence Kosovo since 2008 has been enraptured

with new waves of contention which deplore gender-based violence and discrimination against women. Against this background, we analyze in this paper how activists in Kosovo are increasingly more in recent years attempting to counteract and tackle the silences and absences concerning women's rights which have marked the Kosovar society in the past. Specifically, they do this by protesting activities which claim physical space and demand society's attention in an effort to shed light on women's issues, to fight the patriarchy and to bestow on Kosovo Albanian women the recognition and protection they deserve. By discussing the art installation "Thinking of You", the activist event "The Last Tunnel" and the recent, large protest demonstration throughout the Kosovar capital in reaction to the femicide of Liridona Murseli, we discuss the methods used by women's rights and feminist activists in the now-independent Kosovo to address the country's deep-rooted patriarchal culture which continuously downplays the status and protection of women. In doing so, we also explicitly topicalise (1) the role of the researcher as a local Kosovo Albanian woman in examining the discursive counteractions of activists vis-à-vis societal absences, as well as (2) the affordances and limits of such a sociolinguistic endeavor against the background of institutional and ethical obstacles.

Ben Rampton & Thomas Van de Putte
"Hauntology, Sociolinguistics, and Memory Studies"
King's College London

Sociolinguistics needs to take the haunting effects of colonialism, violence and their memories very seriously, but does it need to reinvent itself to do so? Engaging with Deumert (2022), this paper argues that fields like linguistic anthropology, linguistic ethnography and interactional sociolinguistics aren't actually all dominated by methodological positivism and a metaphysics of presence. Indeed if, as many would say, these traditions also stand out for their accounts of ideological subordination in everyday practice, they can be quite important for understanding the "[h]aunting [that] belongs to the structure of every hegemony" (Derrida 1994:46).

Of course, every discipline has its limitations, but sociolinguistics has also often been quite effective in interdisciplinary collaboration, and this paper addresses a dialogue developing between sociolinguistics and memory studies. Both are actually rather experienced in examining "what is unseen and unspoken, what lies under the surface of open dialogue and... behaviour, which often remains also unformulated and unarticulated by the subject [and which] evokes anxiety and dread for reasons the subject cannot fully identify" (Good et al 2022:442), but they have different strengths and weaknesses - ethnographic and interactional sociolinguistics offer the conceptual and methodological tools to sense the figures haunting the micro-details of practice, while memory studies has a long tradition interpreting how cultural meanings attributed to difficult pasts affect relations in the present.

The paper considers the complementarity of sociolinguistics and memory studies, and it looks at empirical data sessions as sites where absent presences can be explored,

while also holding to a principled social scientific stance of “committed witnessing rather than clairvoyant leadership” (Santos 2012:51).

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Luisa Martin Rojo
“Tracing Francoist Necropolitics in Madrid’s Landscape”
Autonomous University of Madrid

This presentation explores the complex urban, semiotic, and linguistic dimensions of Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria (Complutense University campus) and the Moncloa area, with a particular focus on their historical significance during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. It emphasizes the central role of the campus as a battleground in the defense of Madrid during the conflict, while also examining how its postwar reconstruction and urbanization reflected the values and ideologies of the regime and served as mechanisms for the exercise of power.

Key aspects explored include the regime's use of necropolitics and the imposition of its pillars - such as the military, the church, and fascist organizations - to consolidate dictatorial authority. Through detailed analysis, the presentation reveals how these power dynamics were manifested in the landscape, including the administration of life and death, measures of control and surveillance, the construction of privilege, and the imposition of knowledge and national narratives.

By examining the architectural and symbolic elements of the landscape, the presentation sheds light on the complex interplay between political rationalities, strategies of governance (including necropolitics), urban design, and semiotic and linguistic practices. Ultimately, it aims to provide insights into the enduring impact of the dictatorship on urban environments and collective memory, while also stimulating discussions on the preservation of historical memory and the promotion of reconciliation in societies grappling with political and social discord.

Participating as Discussants (in alphabetic order)

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