

## TAKING THE 'PULSE' OF SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPES

Organizer: Christopher Stroud

The philosopher Malpas tells us that *place* is neither like toothpaste nor like gravity – there was no such thing as place before the existence of humanity, and place is not something manufactured separately from the human. Place is where we engage with the world that makes us, as we simultaneously make the world, and where Self and world-making happens in a being-in-the world with others. Semiotic/Linguistic landscapes are an integral part of how we make sense of place and person/self and other, and from this perspective, the study of SLLs is about what it *means* to be in place, the variety of ways in which meanings of place are made, and how relationships to others are mediated through the linguistic and material semiotics of place (cf Kerfoot and Hyltenstam (2017) on *Orders of visibility*; Peck, Stroud and Williams (2019) on *semiotopology*). LLs bring the pasts we inhabit to memory or erasure, articulate (or silence) our aspirations; fuel our imaginations and desires; and kindle the visceral fears and resistances for continued presents and unknown futures. As ever moving, emergent and fluid selves, we coordinate and anchor our journeys in the fixities of semiotic constructs (although continually resemiotized and in flux) that give rhythm and pace to our embodied existences.

Mpendukana (2023) notes that much research methodology is

informed by a large archive of research predominantly developed in the epistemic context of the (geopolitical) North framed by a specific politics of knowledge production with a history of creating a hierarchical society of colonial subjugation [...] such methodologies tend towards decontextualization and erasure of concrete circumstances – corporeal, material, affective

In this 'experimental' workshop, we explore a geopolitically southern African approach to 'knowing the world' as proposed by the Senegalese Statesman-philosopher Senghor (cf. Diagne), namely *rhythm*.

Diagne writes that rhythm should be thought of as

the architecture of being, the internal dynamism that gives it form, the system of waves it emanates toward the *Others*, the pure expression of vital force. Rhythm is the vibrating shock, the force that, through the senses, seizes us at the root of *being*. It expresses itself through the most material and sensual means: lines, surfaces, colors, and volumes in architecture, sculpture and painting; accents in poetry and music; movements in dance.

The question we explore in the workshop is to what extent attention to *'rhythm'* may offer one methodological approach to understanding the co-constitution of place and person (s) in semiotic landscapes.

### Workshop task

Choose an artifact, sign, an absence or trace (some order of (in)visibility) or a set of sign artifacts (perhaps including their sonority, their texture, their placement) that *'touches/moves you'*, that *resonates with you, seizes you*, that you *intuitively* feel speaks to you; that pulls you into its *rhythm*. Think about what pulled you in, what resonated? How would you capture this resonance? What modality of representation would you choose to contour it (e.g. music, song, poetry, performance, narrative)? What questions does it raise for you about inhabiting or traversing our world and histories? How does it speak to our sense of self and the ethics of researcher engagement?

Put an image of the artifact with your brief reflective notes on the above task onto the following Google drive link: Xxxxx.

The session will be structured as:

09.00 - 09.45: Introduction: a short overview of qualitative methods in semiotic landscape research, and the (possible) place of rhythm

10.00 - 11.15: Display and discussion of collected artifacts and modes of representation

11.30 - 12.00: Concluding notes: implications and uses

### References

Peck, Amiana, Christopher Stroud, and Quentin Williams (eds.). 2018. *Making sense of People and Place in Linguistic Landscapes*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, Academic

Caroline Kerfoot and Kenneth Hyltenstam (eds.). 2017. *Entangled Discourses: South-North Orders of Visibility*. New York: Routledge (Critical Studies in Multilingualism)

Diagne, Souleymane Bachir. 2011. *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude*. Trans. Chike Jeffers. London: Seagull Books. (Orig. pub. 2007 in French).