

Landscape and the language sciences

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In recent years, landscape has become an increasingly significant target of study for the language sciences. Its spatial fundamentality and universal yet variable nature triggers a range of essential linguistic questions. How do languages select geographic objects to be labeled? Are there universal categories? What's the relationship between common and proper nouns? Which are the ontological principles of landscape categories? How and why do categorial strategies vary across languages and speakers? Landscape also creates a number of connections between the language sciences and other disciplines with a longer tradition of interest in the domain, such as geography, anthropology, archaeology, philosophy, and environmental psychology. In this talk I will discuss the linguistic landscape agenda of recent years and assess its potential for the language sciences and for interdisciplinary collaboration. I will make particular reference to work carried out in LACOLA, an ERC-funded project concerned with landscape categorization across a number of lesser-known speech communities.