**Sexing diversity: Linguistic landscapes of homonationalism**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this talk is to bring under the spotlight the ways in which diversity can be incorporated into nationalist discourses for a nation-state’s economic gains. Whilst existing sociolinguistic and discourse analytical research tends to foreground the commodification of language and ethnicity, our focus here is on sexual and gender diversity in relation to the processes of marketing Israel as a sexually progressive nation-state. Commonly known as *pinkwashing*, such a nation-branding strategy is but “one manifestation and practice […] of homonationalism” (Puar, 2012: 337); it works by including sexual diversity into nation-state discourses in such a way that Israel can present itself to the rest of the world as a beacon of sexual liberalism in the Middle East, and concomitantly “washes away” its oppressive and neo-colonial politics against Palestinians. This nationalist project is underpinned by strong capitalist imperatives in that the marketing of a sexually and gender progressive Israel ultimately aims at attracting a large number of “pink” consumers from around the world. Perhaps the most successful manifestation of this twofold nationalist/consumerist enterprise is Tel Aviv Pride, which, according to Israeli media, attracted over 20,000 foreign tourists for its 20th anniversary in 2013.

Against this backdrop, in this talk, we not only analyse initiatives driven by the Israeli state and its official tourism apparatus, but we also cast a critical eye to the circuit of discourses that make up Israeli homonationalism more broadly, paying attention to some of the more mundane (micro) queer complicities that legitimate (macro) state-driven practices. For this purpose, we investigate a sample of textual formations that are part of a larger corpus of data consisting of newspaper articles, photos, webpages, interviews and material artefacts on the so-called ‘Brand Israel Campaign’ and Tel Aviv Pride. We do so through a linguistic landscape approach that is informed by (1) Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) ideas about the rhizome, (de)territorialisation and reterritorialisation; (2) Billig’s (1995) discourse analytical insights into banal nationalism; and (3) Said’s (1994 [1978]) theorisation of orientalism.

Through discourse analysis, we seek to offer a detailed account of the *discursive tactics* through which homonationalism operates and is legitimated via a variety of apparently banal discursive practices. Thus, we seek to add linguistic precision and empirical substance to an existing body scholarship, which is largely theoretical in nature and has therefore failed to give a detailed description of how homonationalism actually works through discourse. On the other hand, through the lenses of a linguistic landscape approach, we seek to bring fresh insights into the ways in which banal homonationalism operates *spatially* in discursive, bodily, and affective practices. In this way, we want to highlight the theoretical relevance of Deleuze and Guattari’s (2004) ideas, an important but we believe somewhat neglected framework within sociolinguistics and language and communication more broadly (see however Pietikäinen, 2015 for a notable exception).