Karel Arnaut

Writing along the margins: cosmopolitanism and autochthony in a West African city

Karel presents this ethnographic and sociolinguistic study cum partial text edition of an autobiographical text. The latter was written by an Ivorian former militia member whose ‘nom de guerre’ and ‘nom de plume’ is Marcus Garvey and whose text is entitled: ‘The companion: chronicle of a Noussi at war’. By identifying as a ‘Noussi’ the author highlights his subaltern status as a school drop-out and a ‘self-employed’ slum-dwelling urbanite whose everyday activities and language-use as well as his literary products are entrenched in Abidjanese street culture. The latter can be qualified as extravert and cosmopolitan. This appears to contradict Garvey’s rather explicit exclusionist, autochthonist stances in his activism and writings.

Massimiliano Spotti (Tilburg University, visiting scholar WG Sociolinguistic Diversity)

On the importance of being autochthonous: the micro-politics of asylum seeking along the Belgian-French border

Max takes into examination the formal and informal micro-politics of identity (mis)recognition in asylum seeking claims. More specifically, this contribution shows how being autochthonous, that is, being authentically from the place one claims to be coming from, is not solely something that has to be proven to authorities through factual-ergoic linear reports, i.e., you know these facts about the country you claim to come from ergo you are authentically from there. It is also a relevant process in the informal micro-politics of identity recognition that take place within the walls of the asylum center. The center in question is situated in Menen, on the French-Belgian border.