

IV International Conference on the Counter Image (Faro, 18–20 Nov 26)

University of Algarve, Faro, Portugal, Nov 18–20, 2026

Deadline: May 25, 2026

Teresa Flores

How to speak with(in) the earth?

Situated knowledges, unnamings methods, and visions from the threshold

4th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE COUNTER-IMAGE

“I could not chatter away as I used to do, taking it all for granted. My words now must be as slow, as new, as single, as tentative as the steps I took going down the path away from the house...”

Ursula K. Le Guin, “She Unnames Them,” *The New Yorker* (January 21, 1985)

The question “How to speak with(in) the earth?” is not a metaphor but a political, ontological, and epistemic imperative in the face of ecological collapse, the exhaustion of anthropocentric frameworks, and the representational models of the colonial-capitalist regime and its paradigm of territorial expansion and occupation—the plantation, whose logic of extraction, objectification, and extinction persists (Le Petitcorps et al. 2023; Bastos 2020; Thomas 2019; Haraway 2015; Tsing 2015; McKittrick 2013; Mirzoeff 2011; Stoler 2008, 2016; Hartman 2007). The Posts—postcolonialism, postmodernism, posthumanism—we insist on using to make sense of a world yet to be overcome are being replaced by the prefix Geo (Pratt 2025, 2022; Coelho & Ponce de León 2025; Krieger 2022; Ray 2019, 2026; Latour 2018; Povinelli 2016).

The “advent of the Geo,” Mary Louise Pratt (2025) points out, marks a shift in scale (from the global to the planetary), imaginary (from the political to the ecological), and temporality (from historical time to deep time—the geological). This shift implies questioning what we take for granted and adopting alternative ways of thinking and producing knowledge that Gabriela Milone and Franca Maccioni, in “The Land of Language, the Language of the Earth” (2025), have described as “geo-logy” (the language of the earth) and “geo-graphy” (the writing of the earth). This also entails “speaking with the earth” rather than “about the earth” and in terms of “similarity” rather than “difference”—a “work of imagination” and “experimentation.” Emphasising subjectivation rather than objectification (Kopenawa 2010); prioritising fusion rather than occupation (Krenak 2022).

“How to speak with(in) the earth” is therefore inseparable from the question of how the earth has been constituted as object, resource, and image—a point addressed by Ursula K. Le Guin in *She Unnames Them* (1985). This short story explores the colonial impulse to name and identify, creating artificial boundaries, while at the same time urging us to find ways to speak with other creatures. Speaking “with” or “as” rather than “about” the earth signals an epistemological shift, requiring a rethinking of its naming, mediation, and representation. What if the earth were not the referent of discourse but its condition? What if the possibility of speaking with/as the earth opened a

space between the individual and the multiple, between situated territory and planetary totality? This dialectic is methodological: a practice of “unnaming”—of eroding the semantics of objectification, extractivism, and extinction. If the earth has been mapped, renamed, and fenced in (and private property created), it is also resistance, cosmoperception, and ritual.

The 4th Counter-Image unpacks the earth not as theme but rather as onto-episteme. It focuses on situated knowledges rooted in territories, bodies, and relations that thrive within the cracks of colonialism and capitalism, rather than the universal, logocentric language that separates subject from object. It challenges the anthropocentric semantics of positivist science and its fictitious objectivity to instead promote unnamng methods that suspend colonial taxonomies, while enabling the soil, the fossil, the animal, the plant, the stone, the tree, the river, the mountain, the lichen, and the fungus to reveal their unique and interconnected existences. It rejects the pseudo scientific “view from nowhere,” favouring visions from the threshold—those shaped from our grandmothers’ porches or at dusk/dawn in dialectical, incandescent images of impossible syntheses.

Aiming to raise a host of questions rather than provide the answers, the 4th Counter- Image asks: what does it mean to think with/as the earth rather than about it? Is it possible to translate the language of the earth, animals, plants, and minerals? Is “unnaming” a philosophical-aesthetic method? How the visions from the threshold suspend extractive regimes of representation? What kind of artistic practices resist, reconfigure, or disrupt colonial regimes over the land? How to foster forms of belonging, care, and reparation towards a post-extractivist world? Anchored in Portugal’s Southern region of the Algarve, but broadening its connections to other territories, we invite researchers, artists, activists, and essayists to submit proposals engaging with the following thematic axes:

1. Situated Knowledges

How and what does the earth remember? This thread welcomes works grounded in relational compositions and geo-subjectivities that challenge the “view from nowhere,” as well as uncertainty, failure, and contradiction, encouraging the connection between research and lived experience.

- “Terricidio” (Millán 2024) and buen vivir
- Artisanal epistemologies (Farago et al. 2025) and epistemologies of the South
- Decolonial, anti-extractivist, ecofeminist, queer, and trans ecologies
- “Exilic ecologies” (Marder 2023)
- Indigenous and Afro-diasporic cosmopolitics
- The baldio and the quilombo (B. Nascimento 1977, A. Nascimento 1980)
- “Insurgent Archivings” (Biehl 2022) and counter-cartographies
- Environmental struggles, their mourning, and multispecies justice
- Critique of Linnaean taxonomies and biopolitics
- Environmental histories, landscape politics and “pyropolitics” (Marder 2020)

2. Unnaming Methods

If the act of naming is colonizing, how can unnamng promote relationality? This thread welcomes works on geo-semantics and methodological and pedagogical experiments that challenge extractivist and speciesist perspectives.

- Unnamng as a philosophical-aesthetic method
- Poetics of silence and deep listening
- Walking as method and “seeing with the whole body” (Cusicanqui 2015)

- Animal, mineral, and “fossil ontologies” (Castro 2023)
- Geo-aesthetics (Coelho & Ponce de Léon 2025; Krieger 2022; Ray 2019), including volcanic and so-called weed aesthetics
- “Liquid alliances” and aesthetics (Mendes & Garcia-Antón 2026)
- Narratives of relationality and multispecies methods
- “Contracolonizar” (Neêgo Bispo 2015)
- Art as a laboratory of thought (rather than representation)
- Animist cinema and anti-extractivist and anti-speciesist visual assemblages

3. Visions from the Threshold

How to inhabit the threshold and move between worlds? This thread welcomes forms that transcend the dualistic principles of the Plantationocene/Capitalocene—the geo- choreographies that broaden affinities and alliances.

- Epistemologies of the threshold
- “Dark ecology” (Morton 2016), deep time, and submerged temporalities
- Grassroots ecology
- Non-human agency and the redistribution of the sensible
- “Ruins of the Plantationocene/Capitalocene” (Tsing 2015).
- “Interstitial zones” (Gomez-Barris 2017) and riverside and seaside knowledges
- Dialectical images (Benjamin 1940) and “image-skins” (Kopenawa 2010)
- “Ch’ixi” visions (Cusicanqui 2015)
- “Affective alliances” (Krenak 2022)
- “Florestania” (Krenak 2022) and “struggling with the forest” (Milanez 2024)

IMPORTANT DATES

May 25 | Proposal submission

June 30 | Notification of acceptance November 18-20 | Conference

Submission formats:

1. Papers (theoretical or empirical research): 300-word abstract
2. Artistic interventions (performances, poetry readings): 300-word description
3. Discussion circles, workshops, listening walks, affective cartographies: 300-word description

Abstracts (in English, Portuguese or Spanish) should be submitted along with a short bio (100 words) to: counterimageconference@fcsch.unl.pt

Keynote speakers:

Gabriela Milone and Franca Maccioni (National University of Córdoba, Argentina) Felipe Milanez (Federal University of Bahia, Brazil)

Organization Committee:

Inês Beza Barreiros (ICNOVA, NOVA FCSH / CIAC, University of Algarve) Liliana Coutinho (IHC, NOVA FCSH)

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Institutional organization:

ICNOVA, FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa

CIAC, Universidade do Algarve

Institutional Support:

IHC, FCSH, Universidade Nova de Lisboa ICON-Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Utrecht University

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