Ways of going back: A case-study in direction

This talk is about the role that axes play in defining paths of motion. In spite of the rich literature on both domains (axes and paths) there is no explicit account of the relation between them. Almost all of the linguistic and psychological work on reference frames or axes concentrates on their role in determining static, locative relations between two objects, but we do not yet have a good idea of how a dynamic path of motion can be based on an axis. I hope to show that it is worthwhile to develop a simple, though explicit, model of how paths can relate to reference frames, because it turns out that the path domain is actually richer than the place domain, both conceptually and lexically. I will demonstrate this by constructing a semantic map that shows the different ways of going ‘back’ in Dutch, as a case study.