

Ghosts on the line: Researching suicide on the railway

Dr. Robin Pharoah

Founder - Encounter Consulting
Director of Insights – Future Agenda

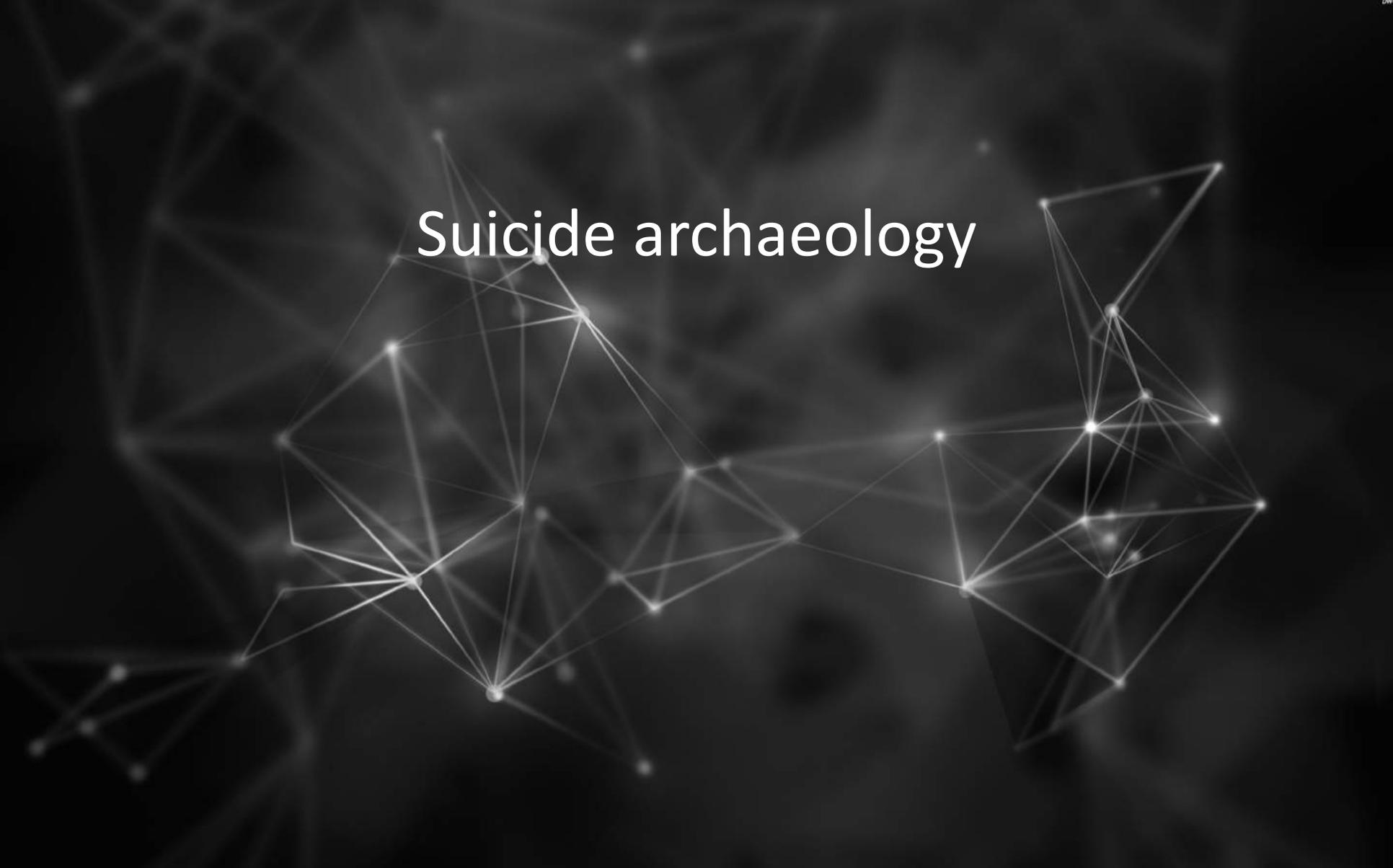
“...we should regard all suicides
as **preventable.**”

House of Commons Health Committee
Suicide prevention: interim report (4) – 2017

Overall age standardized suicide mortality rates by sex 1861–2007



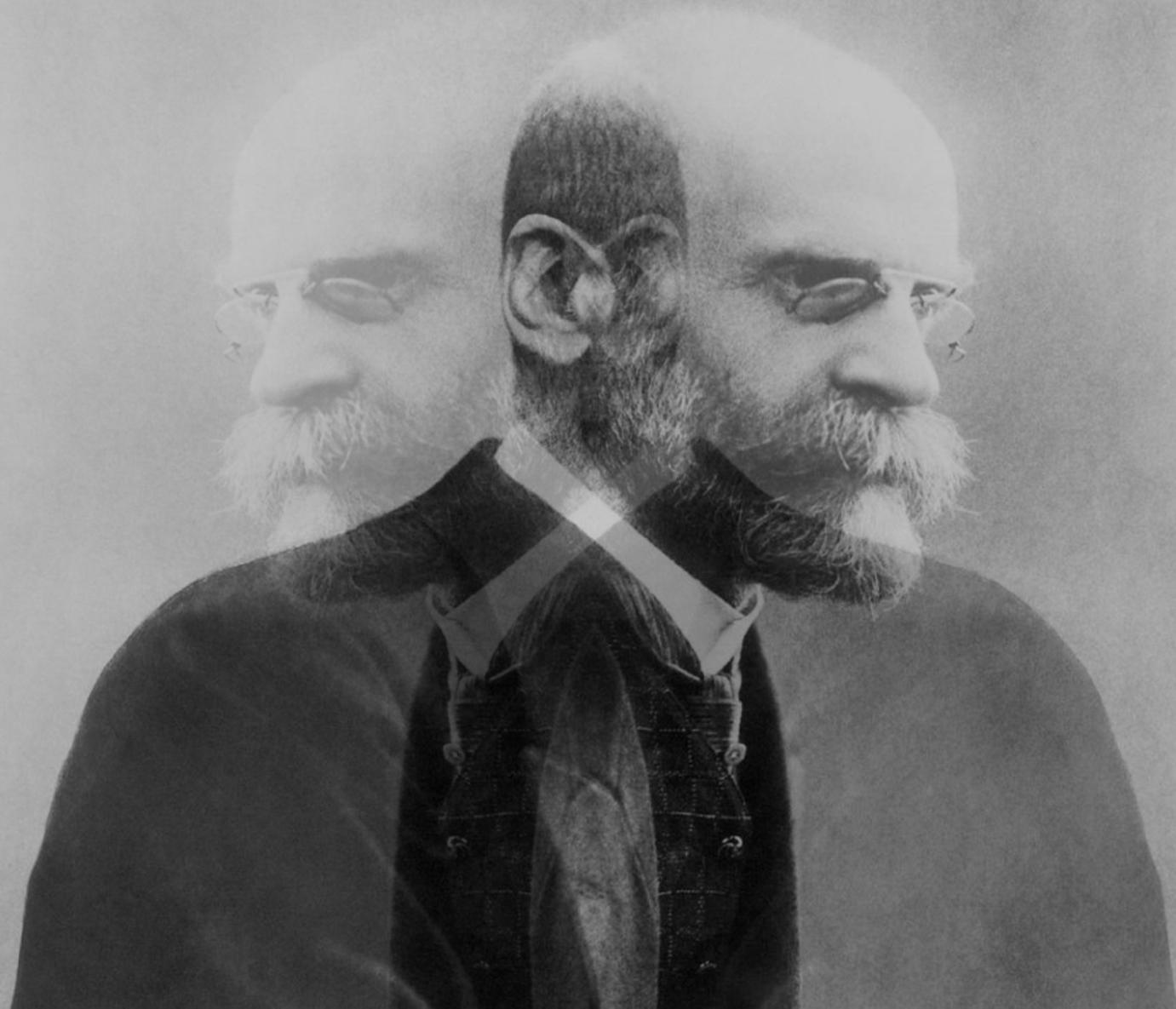
Suicide archaeology

A network graph visualization consisting of numerous white nodes connected by thin white lines, forming a complex web of interconnected points. The nodes are distributed across the frame, with a higher density in the center and right side. The background is dark and textured, resembling a starry night sky or a nebula. The text 'Suicide archaeology' is centered in the upper half of the image in a white, sans-serif font.

The tension of **agency**

“ ...he or she is then easily conceivable as being, and simultaneously not being, the sole author of his or her death.”

Munster and Broz, 2015





The railway and the 'ideation menu'

Given this, it is scarcely the aim of the authors to achieve an ethnographic proximity to suicide, in the sense of getting as close as possible in a temporal, spatial, or empathic sense to suicide acts.

*Rather, they study what may be called **suicide fields**—the wider domains of practices and of sense making, out of which realized, imaginary, or disputed suicides emerge.*

*Instead of producing claims about the causality of suicide, which would compete with psychological or sociological accounts, the ethnographic approach substitutes analytical explanations of suicide(s) for the study of **“popular discourse about causality”***

Daniel Munster and Ludek Broz, 2015

“I’ve never thought about doing it on the railway. **I’m too much of a coward.**”

“**It’s a selfish method.** You would be wrecking so many people’s lives.”

“I’ve made about 13 attempts over the years and not once did I ever think of trains. **It would be so much effort!** Also, think about the drivers...”

“I was scared to go to the train station... I’d been drinking... It was a really scary situation when I thought I might make a **split-minute [sic] decision** and do it... I went and sat in the park.”

“**I found myself standing on the platform** staring at the tracks. I was going to do it. My mum phoned. Literally at that moment.”

I'm too much of a coward.

It's a selfish method.

It would be so much effort!

**I found myself standing on the
platform**

split-minute

decision



I'm going to be alright.
It's not so bad spending
a lot of time alone.



We don't just hear you,
we listen.

SAMARITANS

Call us free any time,
from any phone on **116 123**
samaritans.org

I feel quite good now that I'm on
my own. I just have to try and
forget how much I've been hurt.



We don't just hear you,
we listen.

SAMARITANS

Call us free any time,
from any phone on **116 123**
samaritans.org

I'm alright with being single
I guess. It's not ideal for the kids,
but they seem to be coping.



We don't just hear you,
we listen.

SAMARITANS

Call us free any time,
from any phone on **116 123**
samaritans.org



Class 390

9/11

Car Stop

BANKS'S
THE SWAN
&
RAILWAY

Thank you

Dr. Robin Pharoah

Founder – Encounter Consulting
Director of Insights – Future Agenda
Robin.pharoah@icloud.com

Ian Stevens

Programme manager | Suicide prevention
Network Rail

Samaritans

 **116 123**

