Constructing Multilingual Europe?
Micro and Macro Perspectives

Workshop Proposal for:

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Rationale:

The proposed workshop aims at exploring a range of multilingualism-related practices and policies in different European settings. The main goal of the workshop is to debate how planning, regulating as well as practicing multilingualism in diverse European micro and macro contexts could/should/would construct a ‘multilingual Europe’. We understand the latter as a space in which different languages and cultures can potentially and fruitfully co-exist and interact with each other and thus contribute to create multicultural and diversity-driven societies, institutions and political organisations.

The in-depth analysis of the opportunities for creating a multilingual Europe has never been timelier. As the recent political and economic developments (incl., inter alia the subsequent 2004 and 2007 Enlargements of the EU, or the change of political landscapes in different national settings in Europe) and changes of a socio-demographic nature (enhanced human mobility and migration from outside and within Europe, questions about the core principles of multiculturalism in diverse European societies) illustrate, issues about the true ‘nature’ of a multilingual European space must now be taken under closer consideration and scrutiny. However, while
ultimately proposing future scenarios, the workshop will focus on the current state of the art of different (macro) policies and (micro) practices of multilingualism from a critical perspective. Such an approach, we believe, will allow emphasising that, at present, multilingualism in Europe is frequently observed as an ‘obstacle’ rather than an ‘opportunity’ in both public and private spheres.

The micro-macro perspective of the workshop (proposed inline with the general theme of SS17 – ‘Micro and Macro Connections’) will contribute to several dimensions. First, it will investigate if individual multilingual practices ‘on the ground’ (e.g. in everyday interactions in schools, institutions etc.) are determined by macro regional, national and supranational language and education policies which regulate how members of different linguistic communities should interact with one another; and in which way. Secondly, this workshop will analyse how multilingual settings are influenced by perceptions of multilingualism in different private, semi-public and public spheres (ranging from the micro individual ideas to those disseminated in politics and the media). Finally, the integrated micro-macro perspective will allow determining how regional and national (i.e. local) contexts in which multilingual practices occur on a daily basis can be informed by specific multilingual practices and policies which are (partially) implemented in supranational settings (e.g. within the EU-institutions, or, at even more global levels).

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