

Big Cities, Small Languages

SWLI, Mercator, CIDLeS & ZAS conference

The SOAS World Languages Institute (UK), Mercator Research Centre, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Social and Language Documentation and the Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS) cordially invite scholars, community organisations and community members to join the International Conference on “Big Cities, Small Languages” that will take place in Berlin, Germany, November 14-16 2018, at the ZAS in Berlin, Germany.

By now it is generally known that linguistic diversity of humanity is on rapid decline. Small languages become endangered and extinct, larger languages shrink and become marginalized, driven by the economic forces of globalisation, but also by political suppression and environmental disasters. When we think of this process, we typically envision language communities in remote, rural places far from the centres of these economic forces. However, globalisation means urbanisation, the shift of population to big cities. By this process, big cities often become home to small languages, leading to a surprisingly rich local linguistic diversity. New York City is home to 800 languages, at least 250 languages are spoken in London, and we estimate that there are at least 120 languages spoken in Berlin.

The conference "Big cities, small languages" aims at contributing to the understanding of

- a) how small languages fare in multilingual contexts, in what contexts they are being used and what are the factors that keep them being spoken.
- b) From an ideological perspective, how do big cities deal with small languages? How are they recognized in political representation, in the school- and health-system, and generally, in the culture of these urban places?
- c) How do speakers of small languages consider their own linguistic situation, are there activities to promote and stabilize the use of their languages, and do they work?
- (d) How do the languages influence each other, which forms of code switching, mixing and creolization can we observe?

The conference "BIG cities, small LANGUAGES" intends to bring together scholars from linguistics and social science with an interest and expertise in small languages in urban areas, with a special focus on comparing situations in various cities and with the aim to elucidate the constantly shifting formations of cultural, linguistic and societal identities.

Submission of abstracts

The deadline for submissions is **Friday, 15th July 2018**

Presentations will last 30 minutes in total, with 20 minutes for the talk and 10 minutes for discussion. Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words, not including any references. Each author is limited to a single abstract, including co-authored submissions. Please submit your abstract through EasyChair (<https://easychair.org/cfp/BISL2018>).

Important dates

Deadline for abstract submission: 15th July 2018

Notification of acceptance: 15th August 2018

Conference: 14-16 November 2018

Organisers

Mandana Seyfeddinipur (SOAS World Languages Institute)

Cor van der Meer (Mercator Research Centre / Fryske Akademy)

Vera Ferreira (Centro Interdisciplinar de Documentacao Linguistics e Social)

Manfred Krifka (Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft)

Natalia Gagarina (Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft)

All questions about submissions should be emailed to BISLNovember2018@gmail.com

For more information, please visit: www.soas.ac.uk/