

ÖLT 2021 - Workshop Proposal

Old and new forms of multilingualism in rural regions

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Expected number of papers: max. 12

Preference: on-site

Public space in Europe is often preconceived as urban, and, in turn, urban spaces are often seen as most relevant to the investigation of migration, integration and multiculturalism. In our workshop, we would like to question this commonplace and turn the focus to considering these issues in rural, even peripheral contexts in Europe, all characterized both by the presence of local communities which are already diverse in terms of language and culture and the more recent arrival of migrants.

This deliberate refocusing is timely and urgent. Far from being the unchanging, culturally homogenous sites they are often perceived as, rural spaces across Europe are bound up in historical and contemporary processes of migration and cultural diversity. Their peripheral location makes them desirable sites for tourism and other kinds of temporary mobilities, something which in turn becomes an economic necessity for such spaces (Pietikäinen/Kelly-Holmes 2013, Pietikäinen/Kelly-Holmes/Jaffe/Coupland 2016). At the same time, imbalances in infrastructure, economic development and cultural offerings can make rural communities the target of nativist political discourses (Richardson/Wodak 2009).

In our workshop, we would like to get an interdisciplinary understanding of how rural communities across Europe are affected by, and deal with, global migration flows, and to what extent rural regions provide opportunities for everyday multilingual and multicultural encounters. While we define multilingualism not only in view of single languages, but also with regard to regional varieties and dialects, we especially welcome contributions that focus on rural regions where different languages and cultures have coexisted for centuries. By comparing these already multilingual and multicultural rural areas alongside supposedly monolingual and monocultural rural areas, we would like to get an insight into how migration influences pre-existing structures, also in view of old minorities.

The main research questions we would like to tackle in our workshop can thus be summarized as follows:

- What are (dis-)similarities between different European rural areas in view of how their local communities react to and deal with migration?
- How do old and new forms of multilingualism, i.e. autochthonous and allochthonous language communities, interact in rural regions and influence pre-existing structures?
- How can the full potential of rural areas in view of multilingual and multicultural public space and public sphere in Europe be developed?