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Positions and Positionings in Contradiction A Conference Series on Contradictory Discourses of Marginality

Call for Papers

Bremen-Turku-Warsaw-Stockholm Series on

Studies in Discourse and Contradiction

BTWS Series 2018– | #2 | October 18th and 19th 2019 in

Åbo/Turku, Finland

General goals

The German departments at the University of Bremen, Åbo Akademi University, University of Warsaw and Stockholm University address questions of social positions and positionings in a conference series on contradictory discourses of marginality.

Social positions and positionings are often connected to linguistic practices of stance taking, staging, and of making oneself heard. Questions of marginal or central membership in groups have a high significance in constituting voices of actors in discourse. In these processes of positioning, in the sense of stance taking and/or staging, contradictory discursive figurations become visible.

The goal of the conference series is to engage in an in-depth analysis of contemporary discourses shaped by contradictory configurations. The conference series is also associated with the section *Discourses on Centrality and Marginality – Discourse Linguistic Agendas in Times of Contradiction* at the XIV. Congress of the International Association for Germanic Studies in Palermo, Italy (IVG 2020).

The second conference within the series will take place in Åbo/Turku, Finland. With the following call we kindly invite you to submit an abstract for this event.

BTWS #2

Marginality and Centrality in Contradictory Discourses of Religious and National Belonging

Åbo Akademi University, Åbo/Turku, Finland, October 18th and 19th 2019

This year's conference focuses on declarations of marginal and central belonging with a particular focus on religion and nationality. We aim to investigate both declarations of marginal and central belonging to groups as well as declarations of marginal and central belonging of groups to society. An example for these kinds of communicative practices is the

political disputes on the status of Islam within the German national community. The sentence “Islam belongs to Germany”, uttered in various forms by a number of politicians since the 2000s, is inclusive while at the same time reproducing a marginal position of the religion within society as it comprises the possibility of its negation.

While this example clearly demonstrates the excluding and discriminatory forces of declarations of marginal belonging, marginality does not always appear to be something to fear, nor is it always a position that individuals and groups are trapped in despite their wishes. It can in seemingly contradictory cases be something that individuals and groups actively seek, something that they in different ways and for different ends try to claim for themselves. For example, right-wing populist politicians declare that they and their voters are being marginalised by other political groups. In this logic, a motivation for their politics is the reclamation of a central position in the nation state, which they construct as rightfully theirs. In this case, a self-positioning as marginal or marginalised appears to be an empowering group strategy. Therefore, the conference will not only deal with the discursive processes of the production of marginality and centrality, but also with the agency that emerges from marginal and central positions.

Starting from these observations, we are interested in theoretical and empirical research that analyses contradictory discourses of belonging to religious, national and other groups and of these groups to society as a whole. These belongings can be expressed in agendas, arenas, and agencies.

Agendas When are claims of marginal and central belonging used strategically by individuals and groups for themselves or for others to gain rights, power, status or resources?

Arenas In which forums and through which media do individuals and groups negotiate their and others’ belonging and stance?

Agencies What are the possible options for action arising from marginal and central positions?¹

The organisers approach these topics from an interdisciplinary linguistic perspective, and wish to invite researchers from all disciplines to contribute to disciplinary and interdisciplinary discussions.

The languages of the second conference in the series are English and German. We are currently inviting abstracts of up to 300 words. Please send an email to hanna.acke@abo.fi including a PDF with your proposal together with a short biographical note and the titles of three of your publications no later than **21st of April 2019**.

Please indicate whether your institution will be able to cover your expenses or whether your participation depends on external funds. We are currently trying to secure funding for the conference, however, we will only be able to inform you if travel and accommodation support is available at a later stage.

Bremen – Turku – Warschau – Stockholm, March 2019

Ingo H. Warnke – Hanna Acke – Silvia Bonacchi – Charlotta Seiler Brylla

¹ We would like to thank all participants of the first conference in Bremen who contributed to delineating the topic for this second call for papers.