

PLM 2018 thematic session

“The longue durée: how traditional historical linguistics can contribute to modern debates over language evolution”

Conveners:

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The roughly 5000 years that have passed since the beginning of written records may be a blink in the eye of human evolution, but afford more than sufficient time for sweeping transformations on all levels of linguistic structure. With their rich attestation spanning millennia, language families such as Indo-European and Afroasiatic offer bounteous data for general theories of language change. For example, Indo-European languages have evolved all manner of palatalized and velarized stops and complex series of fricatives and affricates, but retroflex or ejective stops have in all known cases been introduced by contact with non-Indo-European languages. With respect to morphosyntax, Indo-European languages have undergone all manner of changes in the verbal system, including wholesale loss and creation of categories expressing tense, aspect, mood, and evidentiality, and the rise and fall of ergativity in much of Indo-Aryan and Iranian; yet the subject-agreement markers have remained for the most part strikingly stable. In the noun phrase, there is a widespread tendency already in the oldest Indo-European languages toward reduction of morphological case and grammaticalization of prepositions, but no tendency to develop inflectional prefixes or classifiers. Such observations are hardly new, but they have assumed renewed significance in recent years with the growth of interest in diachronic typology, i.e. the origin, distribution, and long-term stability of particular linguistic features.

We invite papers dealing with the “big picture” of diachronic change in languages or language families with long recorded histories, including but of course not limited to Indo-European, from overall typology to individual components of grammar. Likewise welcome are papers examining the interaction of internal and external factors in language change, the latter including but not limited to multilingualism, geography, and social structure, as well as debates over

genetic inheritance vs. areal diffusion and the long-term evolution of linguistic areas. Interdisciplinary approaches making use of data from anthropology, psychology, and/or population genetics are also encouraged.

The deadline for submissions is **April 1, 2018**. Please submit your abstracts with EasyChair, following the general guidelines for PLM 2018.

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