

5th Plurilingualism European Conference

23-24 may 2019 – Bucharest

4th call for papers

Multilingualism in sustainable development:

The hidden dimension

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Abstract

UNESCO reminds us that linguistic diversity and multilingualism are essential for sustainable development, but the focus is on endangered languages and places the safeguarding of linguistic diversity on an equal footing with biodiversity. The issue of endangered languages is indeed essential, and some studies suggest that the disappearance of languages presents significant risks for biodiversity conservation. What we want to show is that languages come into play in all the economic, social and cultural processes that underpin development. Culture, education and health are major factors of development of which the accumulation of capital is more a consequence than a cause and, wherever one places oneself in the world, one can say that the role of language is omnipresent. Whether it is poverty, personal development, social advancement, social cohesion, the circulation of knowledge and ideas, territorial development, identity, economic performance, migration, the digital revolution, war and peace, there are language issues to varying degrees. Languages are therefore the hidden dimension of sustainable development that we must bring to light. Obviously, language policies, when they exist, are not neutral. We must therefore try to answer the question: how can language policies contribute to sustainable development?

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Introduction

The notion of sustainable development is now classic in the sense that it has been defined for a long time and that because of its conceptual richness, and its prospective aspect, it has lost none of its topicality.

The concept was formally defined in the report of the [United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development](#), the [Brundtland Report](#), where the term first appeared in 1987.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

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The idea is not as new as you first think. A semantic controversy over whether to speak of [sustainable or sustainable development](#) has existed since the second French translation where the Canadian publisher translated sustainable as sustainable¹.

Advocates of the term "sustainable" rather than the word "sustainable" insist on the notion of sustainability defined as coherence between the Earth's long-term global needs and resources, rather than on the idea of seeking the limit to which the Earth will be able to feed humanity. However, the translation of the term by sustainable, rather than sustainable, can also be explained by old traces of the word in French. Indeed, we find the word support used in an environmental perspective as early as 1346, in [Brunoy's ordinance](#), taken by [Philippe VI de Valois](#), on the administration of forests, recommending "to support them in good condition". Thus in forestry the notion of cultivated forest subject to a requirement of sustainability, a perpetual renewal of the resource, capable of supplying a naval fleet, has existed in France for more than six centuries.

Economists had already laid the foundations in the 1960s. This is the case, for example, of the French philosopher, historian and economist François Perroux, who in a chapter of his book *L'économie du XXe siècle*, published in 1961, chapter entitled "La notion de développement" explains as follows:

"The economist, asked: "What is development? "Development is the combination of the mental and social changes of a population that make it capable of growing, cumulatively and sustainably, its real global product. »

One wonders whether sustainability is not part of the very notion of development and that the term development should be sufficient in itself. The addition of the adjective "sustainable" is more of a communication problem than a theoretical question. It is therefore not appropriate to dwell on them.

So we're in the long run. The use of the idea of "needs" suggests that sustainable development must meet the basic material and cultural needs of the entire population, which is incompatible with the extension of precariousness and the extreme exaggeration of inequalities, and that development is not strictly material and is above all global.

In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio, held under the auspices of the United Nations, formalized the notion of sustainable development and that of the three pillars (economic/ecological/social): economically efficient, socially equitable and ecologically sustainable development.

For its part, Unesco has established an indisputable link between plurilingualism and sustainable development in three fundamental documents.

Article 1 of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states:

"Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the originality and plurality of identities that characterize the groups and societies that make up humanity. A source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for life. In this sense, it constitutes the common heritage of humanity and must be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations."

The themes chosen in 2018 for the International Mother Language Day, which takes place on 21 February each year, and the celebration of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, have themselves fully integrated sustainable development. Little mentioned in the many events relating to sustainable development, the linguistic dimension is really a hidden dimension.

The purpose of this conference is therefore, beyond these prestigious professions of faith, to bring out in all aspects of sustainable development the linguistic factor that is largely unknown.

1 https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A9veloppement_durable#Histoire_du_mot

This call for papers explores the main avenues of research to be invested. But it is possible to go directly to the list of possible themes on page 6.

Argumentary

It should first be recalled that the very notion of plurilingualism includes that of linguistic and cultural diversity.

How do language and plurilingualism relate to development?

To ask the question is almost a provocation, insofar as one could say that if one does not understand that there can be a relationship between language and development, it is because one does not know what language is.

Axis 1 - Language

Unlike what linguists have taught for generations, before being a means of communication, language is an instrument of thought. Without entering into the sterile debate of whether thought exists independently of language, it has become evident that language and thought are so closely related that one does not exist without the other. According to Vygotski's very precise formula, thought is not expressed in the word, it is accomplished there.

Having said this, the result will be a whole chain of consequences that are considerable enough to lead to the conclusion that language is a fundamental dimension of the modern reformulation of development that is sustainable development.

It is therefore by travelling around a whole series of issues, not exhaustive, that we invite future speakers to bring out a dimension generally omitted from sustainable development which is its linguistic dimension.

Axis 2 - Education

It makes sense to start with learning the language and mother tongue.

The first stages of the child's socialization are carried out through bodily expression and through the mother tongue, but since the mother tongue can be quite distant from the language the child will learn later, especially at school, the articulation between the mother tongue, or the language spoken in the family, and the language of school is a sensitive point in the child's evolution, and this in a very wide variety of contexts. It is very important to make this variety appear, because the question raised here is not a new one, we know that it has crossed centuries and societies.

The individual dimension is strong, but so is the social dimension. Indeed language will play an important role in social cohesion, but also in the capacity of society to evolve and in the speed of change that a society in motion is capable of assuming. Language is a determining factor in the understanding and circulation of ideas, images and information. Without the language, the exchange is not done or it is much slower. For example, fighting an epidemic without language is problematic. Without language, it would be inconceivable to fight and react against disasters.

Because when we say language, we mean understanding and everything that is carried by language. We're only reactive if we understand what's going on.

Axis 3 - Languages and linguistic diversity in the knowledge society

Culture without language does not exist, it is impossible.

We are obliged to recall this, because of the recent transformations that have shaken notions that were underground because they represented a state of the world that went without saying and that it was therefore not necessary to question.

These changes may have taken several centuries before we appeared, because of the communication society, as novelties. There must be contact between many languages if we are to ask ourselves the question of linguistic diversity and what a language really is. But reflection on language and language is almost absent from what is called general culture.

Writing is not new, but civilization has so far been able to function with largely illiterate masses. You could live without being able to read or write, as long as you were able to speak. Orality was omnipresent.

Today that is not possible.

Mechanization and tertiarization mean that all trades, even the most manual ones, are written down at one time or another.

It is therefore necessary to question the scope of these profound changes in societies at a time when, paradoxically, the quality of language is tending to decline, perhaps because of the unjustified belief that the image is replacing the text.

Axis 4 - Languages and globalisation: contacts between languages and discovery of diversity

But other large-scale phenomena accompany globalization.

Globalisation goes back a long way, but never as far as in recent decades have people with their particular languages been in contact with each other, whether through trade, which covers all stages of the economic cycle from raw materials to the final consumer; whether in work, an ever-increasing proportion of workers are in direct or indirect contact with correspondents of other distant or nearby nationalities, even within companies, multinationals or not, at the same place of work or at distant locations. Business management therefore has a linguistic dimension that is becoming increasingly important, and remains very underestimated in management schools. The development of tourism is also a revolution linked to the revolution in transport and lifestyles, whose linguistic and cultural dimension is all too obvious. The development of digital technology, a revolution comparable to the advent of printing, facilitates and accelerates the circulation of ideas, while reinforcing the weight of writing, language and translation, with sometimes very severe effects on the most fragile populations.

But the approach of relations between populations through trade, tourism and digital gives an irenic vision of things, very incomplete.

Not all population movements are driven by tourism and economic and political migration present new challenges to those who experience them and to the societies that host them. Contact between strong and weak languages can lead to the death of the latter, destroying a form of biodiversity.

Axis 5 - Plurilingualism and the Nation-State

The so-called nationalities movement developed during the 19th century. In short, this movement was driven by the emancipation of the peoples who belonged to the great multinational empires that were notably the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Ottoman empire. The result has been an

exacerbation of the principle of the nation-state, which would like to see the people, the state and the language coincide, in other words, to bring together within a single state a people identified by language.

The case is complex because the history of languages and political history do not exactly overlap, even if they are very intertwined. Languages do not always know borders and states are more often multilingual than monolingual. However, the idea that democracy exists only through the will of the people and the expression of citizens and that language is an essential means of expressing citizenship leads us to see language as the foundation of all democratic expression as well as a condition of social cohesion.

It is easy to understand that the application of these principles, whose legitimacy is not in question, comes up against the complexities of historical experiences and therefore that language, without being neither the only nor the main cause of conflicts in general, is almost always an issue. So plurilingualism has a strong relationship with war and peace and with identity tensions. And it is quite clear that war and peace also have a strong relationship with sustainable development, as with development itself.

Axis 6 - Plurilingualism, a philosophical issue

But the contact between languages comes to rest fundamental philosophical questions whose linguistic aspect was maintained as on the edge, a dormant aspect in a way. Languages are all the product of diverse historical experiences. And they can all claim to a certain reading of the world. But none of them can claim to be reality on their own. This raises the question of the philosophical foundations of monolingualism and the hegemonic claims that accompany it, most often without the very knowledge of those who are its actors. It is therefore very useful to ask ourselves the question of the philosophical underpinnings of language diversity and plurilingualism. We must also ask ourselves the question of the weight of the commodification of knowledge in research and higher education and its implications in terms of sustainable development and linguistic and cultural diversity.

Obviously, language policies, when they exist, are not neutral. We must therefore try to answer the question: how can language policies contribute to sustainable development?

The fields opened by the relationship between plurilingualism and development are immense and diverse. We therefore expect a great diversity of inspiration, stressing that speakers are expected to reflect theoretically on specific questions to which we must provide some answers.

Attached is a thematic list which does not pretend to be exhaustive but which is displayed as so many tracks by which everyone can perhaps find his way.

Thematic list

Thinking between languages and cognitive function of language

Thinking by language and thinking between languages

Communication or information exchange

The functions of language

Full design of the language

Language as perceived by other scientific fields?

Question of interactions between languages (borrowing). Equality or inequality (e.g. Maori

standardization)

Question of illiteracy. Language as a power of emancipation

Machine translation. The Role of English as a Pivotal Language

Is the use of English in the workplace (European institutions) thought neutral?

Unique thinking and sustainable development

Does the domination of a language favour a single thought?

Education in a pluri-multilingual context (e.g. Africa)

Culture: diversity of cultural expressions. Where are we with the application of the international convention?

Endangered languages

Languages in contact and death of languages

Languages in contact in the digital age

Heritage Approach/Social Development

Plurilingualism and poverty

General culture and sustainable development

Languages and democracy

Languages, plurilingualism and identity

Multilingualism and operationality of development assistance programmes

Plurilingualism and adaptation to the environment

Communication Dependence

Communication sustainability

The palaver tree (giving birth like an elephant) = exploit the metaphorical content of languages (proverbs, stereotypes,..)

Plurilingualism and equity

Plurilingualism and health

Plurilingualism and cultural development

Plurilingualism and migration

Plurilingualism and integration

Power of speech and language functions

Plurilingualism, singularity, difference and universality

Plurilingualism and creativity

Multilingualism, war and peace

Language Rights and Sustainable Development

Knowledge commoditization and sustainable development

Language policies and sustainable development

Practical information

Dates: May 23-24, 2019

Places : Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest (AEEB)

Address : Piata Romana nr. 6, sector 1

Answer this call on the dedicated site:

<https://Assises.observatoireplurilinguisme.eu/>

<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/observatoire-europeen-du-plurilinguisme/evenements/5e-assises-europeennes-du-plurilinguisme>

Oral communications will be limited to 15 minutes. Slideshow presentations will be possible.

Abstracts of paper proposals (maximum half-page note or 2000 characters including spaces) must be submitted to the platform before **15 March 2019**.

These summaries will be used for the selection of applications and for the publication of pre-records in the participant's file.

The texts for publication will be produced within one month after the event and posted on the dedicated website using the downloadable article template on the latter.

Catering: insured

Accommodation: not insured

Registration fees

- Online registration required.
- 130 € until **30 April 2019**, **150 € beyond**.
- Free admission for doctoral students from partner institutions depending on available places.

Acts

The participant's file will include pre-records including abstracts of papers.

The acts can be purchased at an advantageous price on the dedicated site at the same time as the payment of the registration fees.

Key dates

Launch of the call for proposals and opening of registrations: 15 June 2018

Deadline for proposals: **March 15 2019**

Notifications: **April 1, 2019**

Publication of the pre-programme: **April 15, 2019**

Deadline for submission of full papers: **June 30 2019**, maximum 10 pages in A5 format or 20,000 characters including spaces. (see online model)

Language regime

Language of the Assises: French, German, Romanian, English, Italian, Spanish.

Plenary sessions will be interpreted into French, German and Romanian.

It is strongly recommended, in the case of presentations by video projection (Powerpoint), that the slides be in a language other than the language used orally.

Publication standards: see special section

Co-organising partners

O.E.P.

Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest (AEEB)

Organizing Committee

François-Xavier d'Aligny, European Observatory for Multilingualism

Anne Bui, European Observatory for Multilingualism

Christos Clairis, University Paris Descartes

Christian Tremblay, European Observatory for Multilingualism

Corina Lascu, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

Antoaneta Lorentz, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies

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Koffi Ganyo Agbefle, University of Ghana, ACAREF (Académie Africaine de Recherches et d'Etudes Francophones)

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