AG 11: Repairs

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A leading hypothesis in recent work on linguistic interfaces is that grammar is an optimal solution to conditions imposed by other cognitive systems (Chomsky 1995, 2001). It is assumed that the operations performed by the computational system of language reduce to the bare minimum required to interpret hierarchical syntactic structures in terms of sound and meaning. At the same time, it is well-known that syntactic structures may be unfit for straightforward interpretation. For example, elements often seem to be semantically interpreted in positions different from their surface position (e.g., scope of quantifiers (QR) and negation). At the sound end, hierarchical syntactic structures must be converted into linearly ordered phonological exponents in order to be interpretable at the serial interface to the articulatory-perceptual system. This process may modify the constituent structure derived in syntax, cf. analyses of 'affix-hopping'/'do-support' in English, or, more generally, clitic placement (see Chomsky 1957, Bobaljik 1995, Lasnik 2000 on the former, and Wackernagel 1892, Bonet 1991, Halpern 1992, Embick & Noyer 2001 on the latter). While such 'repairs' of the syntactic output are usually viewed as imperfections of the grammar, the workshop wants to turn around the perspective and look at repairs as a device that is routinely and virtuously employed by the grammar to economically code interpretations the transparent expression of which would be tedious, unfeasible or even impossible. Adopting, e.g., ideas of C.S. Peirce (cf. also Horn 1989: chapter 5), unexpected modal or generic interpretations might be repairs of logical conflicts (specifically, circumventing the law of contradiction and the law of the excluded middle, respectively); in Antecedent-Contained-Deletion (Sag 1976, May 1985), QR (at LF) and Ellipsis (at PF) seem to furnish interpretations that could not at all be transparently expressed. Specific questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Where do repair mechanisms appear to provide 'shortcuts' – or even necessary conditions – to particular interpretations?
- Where exactly do specific repairs happen – e.g., is there true repair in the semantics, or can pragmatics do all the required work?
- Are there grammaticalization paths that involve a 'repair stage' which gets hard-wired?

The workshop is of interest for researchers working on linguistic interfaces. We are looking forward to applications that provide formally explicit analyses of particular interface phenomena in terms of repair.