



**16<sup>th</sup> SFB-Colloquium, Friday, 20 September 2019, 12.15 pm**  
**University of Potsdam, Campus Golm, Building 14, Room 0,32**

At the invitation of projects A01, A02 and A03

Dr. Heike Pichler (Newcastle University, UK)  
will give a talk on

**The conspiracy of internal and external factors in a discourse-pragmatic  
change: *innit* in Multicultural London English**

Previous studies of the tag form *innit*, illustrated in (1)-(3), have examined its derivation from *isn't it*, its diffusion across social and geographical space, and its spread across syntactic-semantic contexts (Andersen 2001; Cheshire et al. 2005; Childs 2016; Pichler 2013). The consensus has been that *innit* is limited in occurrence to the clausal right periphery and that it shares the functional profile of dependent negative-polarity question tags (NEG-TAGS) (e.g. *isn't it*, *haven't you*, *wouldn't we*).

- (1) It's like that big actually, *innit*?
- (2) We pay them, *innit*? To rob people, *innit*?
- (3) We were down the west end, *innit*?

My more recent analysis of *innit* in the 1.4-million-word *Linguistic Innovators* (LIC) corpus, collected in 2005-2006 in inner- and outer-city London (Kerwill et al. 2007), reveals ongoing developments in the usage and distribution of *innit*. As well as acquiring the status of an invariant right-periphery tag, as in (2)-(3), *innit* is increasingly used as: (i) an interactive narrative device, as in (4); (ii) as a turn-initial attention- and corroboration-seeking device, as in (5); and

(iii) as an information-structuring device appended to left-dislocated or lone NPs, as in (6).

(4) Then we took his bike, ***innit***, joyriding it. Then the police came, ***innit***?

(5) ***Innit***, I don't like trains.

(6) a. The sister, ***innit***, she's about five times bigger than you, innit, Mark?

b. The girl, ***innit***. There was a girl.

In this talk, I will provide an overview of these developments and examine the internal and external factors that conspire to generate them. I will demonstrate how a systematic account of the full range of ongoing developments in the use of *innit* requires a flexible approach to defining the linguistic variable, i.e., to determining which elements to include or exclude across individual analyses. I will also show that the decisive factors triggering and driving the observed changes are found in the sociohistorical context in which they unfold, i.e., that grammaticalization is as much a socially as linguistically embedded process of change.

Everyone is cordially invited.