

Workshop: WRAPP 26 – Wh-elements in Relative and Adverbial clauses: Perspectives on Polyfunctionality

We invite you to submit your papers for the WRAPP workshop, to be held in **Göttingen from April 8 to 10, 2026**, organized by Marco Coniglio, Eric Fuß, Svenja Hauerstein and Alberto Valiera. The workshop aims to bring together perspectives on wh-elements in relative and adverbial clauses, their origin and development, as well as their polyfunctionality.

In many Germanic languages, the functions of wh-words have increased diachronically, especially as elements introducing subordinate clauses. While wh-pronouns primarily appear as interrogatives and indefinites in the earliest historical stages, they subsequently spread first to free relative clauses and later to headed relative clauses. In addition, they begin to appear as adverbial complementizers from the early modern German period onwards. These processes should not be viewed in isolation from one another, as adverbial wh-connectors developed from relative wh-adverbs (*wie* ‘how’, *wo* ‘where’, *wenn* ‘when’) or prepositional adverbs such as *wobei* ‘whereby’. The result is a system in which wh-elements are highly polyfunctional. The details of the processes that lead to the formation of new relative and adverbial construction types have so far been insufficiently researched for the history of German. Previous studies have primarily focused on specific aspects, such as the development of morphologically simple wh-relativizers (*wer* ‘who’, *was* ‘what’) and wh-determiners (*welch-* ‘which’). The aim of the project is to systematically review the relevant historical developments, taking into account qualitative and quantitative aspects to gain a better understanding of the diachronic pathway and possible causes of the spread of wh-forms in relative and adverbial clauses. In addition, a theoretical model is developed that places the individual processes in a larger explanatory context. This context incorporates recent findings on the internal structure and properties of wh-forms, while also embedding historical facts within a restrictive theory of polyfunctional elements.

This workshop is part of a research project on the theory and diachrony of subordinating wh-elements in German and will be held in Göttingen from April 8 to 10, 2026. The project is funded by the German Research Foundation and is being carried out in Bochum and Göttingen. We are pleased to announce the following confirmed keynote speakers and discussants:

Julia Bacskai-Atkari
Ellen Brandner
Werner Frey
Łukasz Jędrzejowski
Karin Pittner
Radek Šimík

Abstract Submission

- Abstracts must be anonymous and should not exceed 2 pages (including references, examples, tables etc.) with 2.5 cm margins on all sides, and be set in Times New Roman (12pt).
- Abstracts should be submitted in PDF format to svenja.hauerstein@ruhr-uni-bochum.de
- Deadline for submissions: **January 20, 2026**

Submission topics

Relevant topics for the workshop include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- origin and development of wh-elements
- adverbial and relative clauses
- adverbial subordinators
- syntax of free relative clauses
- prepositional adverbs