



**GHENT
UNIVERSITY**

THE ENGLISH-MEDIUM ENGINEERING CLASSROOM: SPACES OF MULTILINGUALISM AND INDIVIDUAL REPERTOIRES

Stef Slembrouck & Alexander De Soete – 22 May 2024

SPACES VS PEOPLE

- Traditional view: language community = a people-focused concept, in which the language user can be bilingual/multilingual
- “Spaces of multilingualism” = a shift of attention to the ways in which languages and language repertoires are tied to their use (or not) in particular spaces as part the activities that unfold in them

“A change in spatial environment clearly affects our capacity to deploy linguistic resources and skills and imposes requirements on us which we may fail to meet – a quite common globalization experience which we accept as a sociolinguistic problem.”

“Spaces of multilingualism”, Language and Communication, 2005, p. 197

POLYCENTRICITY

- A globalisation-affected perspective on the distribution of languages within a space.
- An increasing disjuncture in spatial distributions of Ls, i.e. units of language are no longer straightforwardly tied to a community's presence (dominant or diasporic)
- A center has a language regime
 1. Likelihood of languages used
 2. (Normative) expectations that (a) certain language(s) will or can be used
 3. Value of a language in terms of its importance, officialdom, having street currency, on/off-the-record use, etc.

“Understanding multilingualism ... requires an understanding of the connections between different centers and their orders” ... and “... semiotizable practices in spaces ...”

“Polycentricity and interactional regimes in global neighborhoods”, In: Ethnography, 2005, p. 207

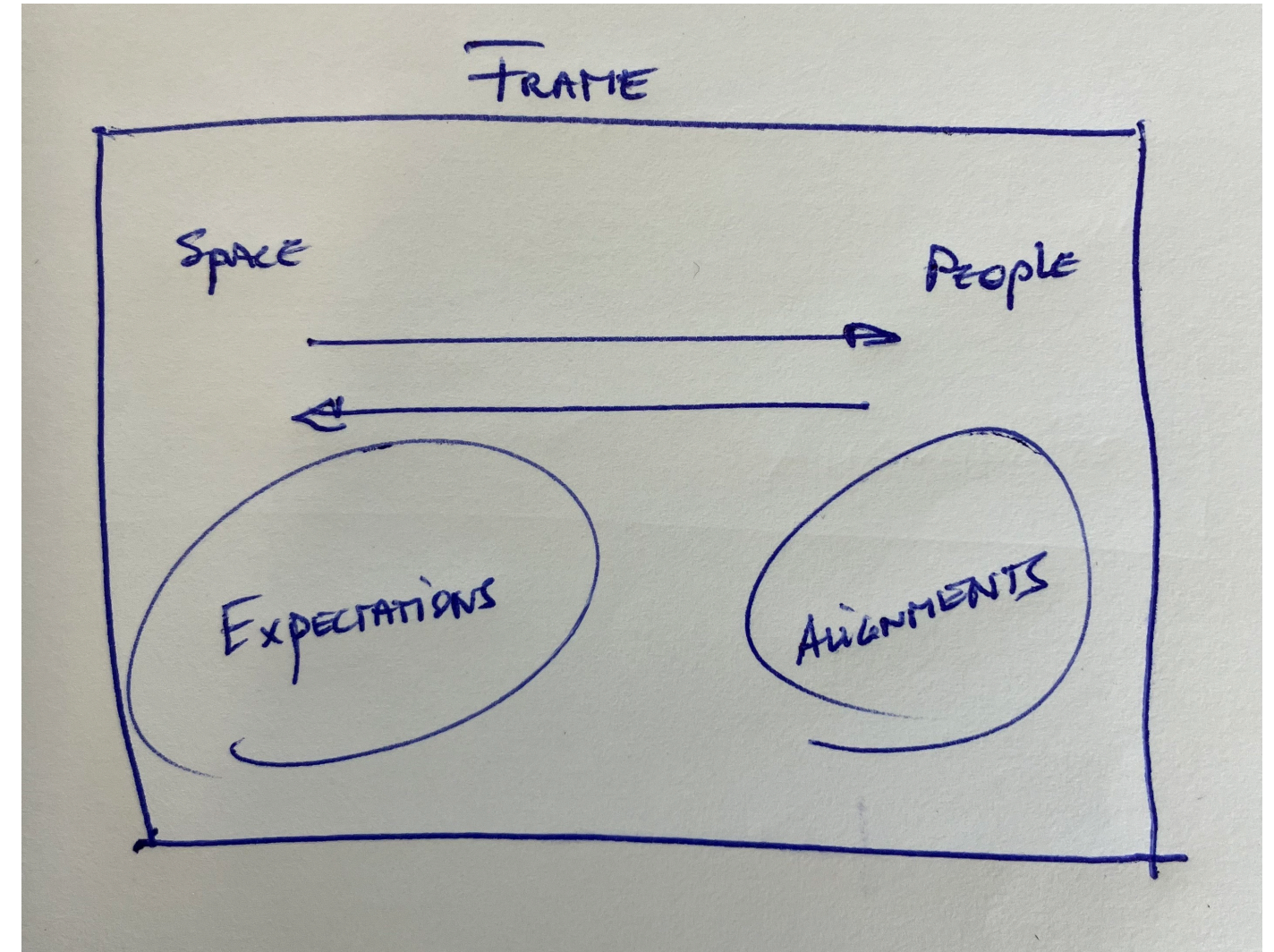
POLYCENTRICITY CTD.

- Centers are “scaled” entities, incl. they are networked, in scalar ways
- Centers process people, who may frequent different centres with diverging language regimes within a single geographical area
 - Centers “scan” and “serve” populations of users
 - Centers exert a normative influence on populations of users



SPACE, FRAME AND ALIGNMENT

- Goffman's notion of frame connects spaces with people by being activity-focused
- Frame is both a socio-cognitive and action-dependent concept
- Frame = an enacted spatial configuration



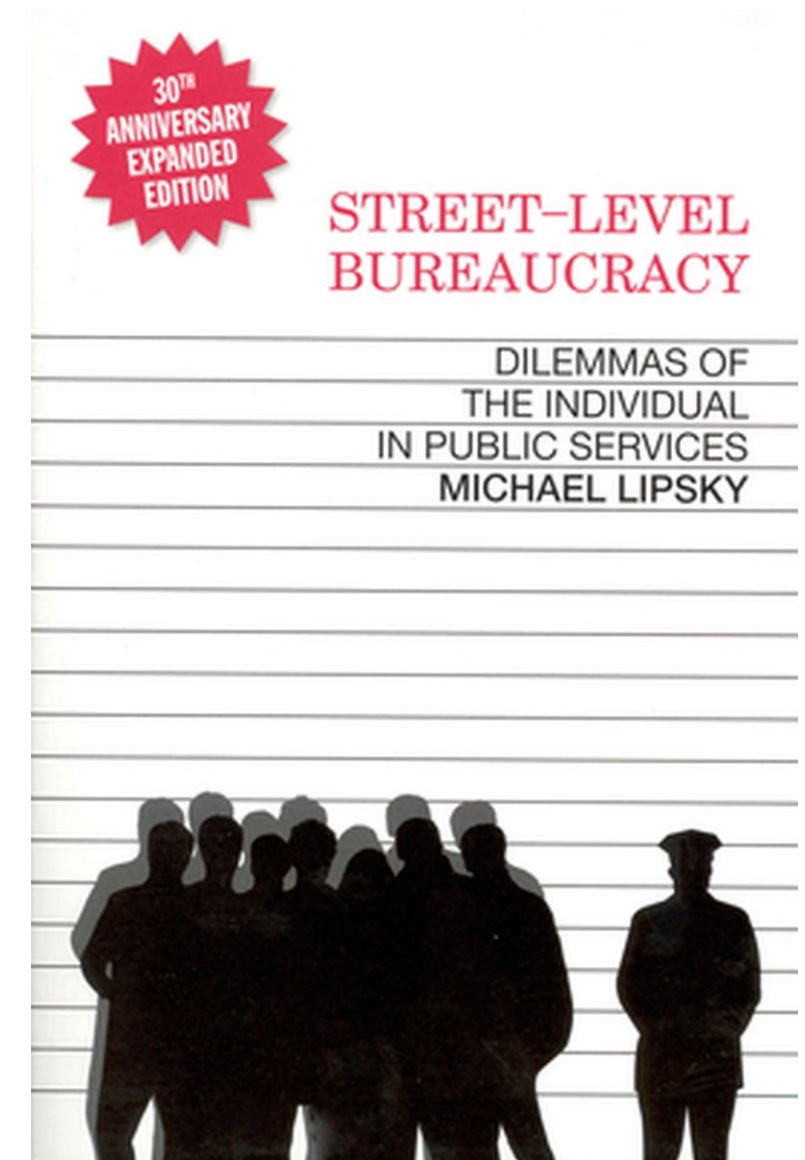
PLURILINGUAL SPEAKERS IN MULTILINGUAL SPACES/SITUATIONS

- Empirically focus on the dynamics of shifting alignments within an activity-specific frame, so as to bring together spatialised distributions (cf. “expectations”) and person-based repertoires as manifest in frame-relevant behaviour (cf. “enacted alignments”)
- This enables an enacted perspective on “policy”, such as has been developed and advocated by Michael Lipsky’s notion of the “street level bureaucrat”
- Note the “in-between” perspective that is thus being adopted, as preferred in interactional sociolinguistics

STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY IN THE EMI CLASSROOM

– Street-level bureaucracy

- From study of public policy/administration



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- Operate with relative discretion

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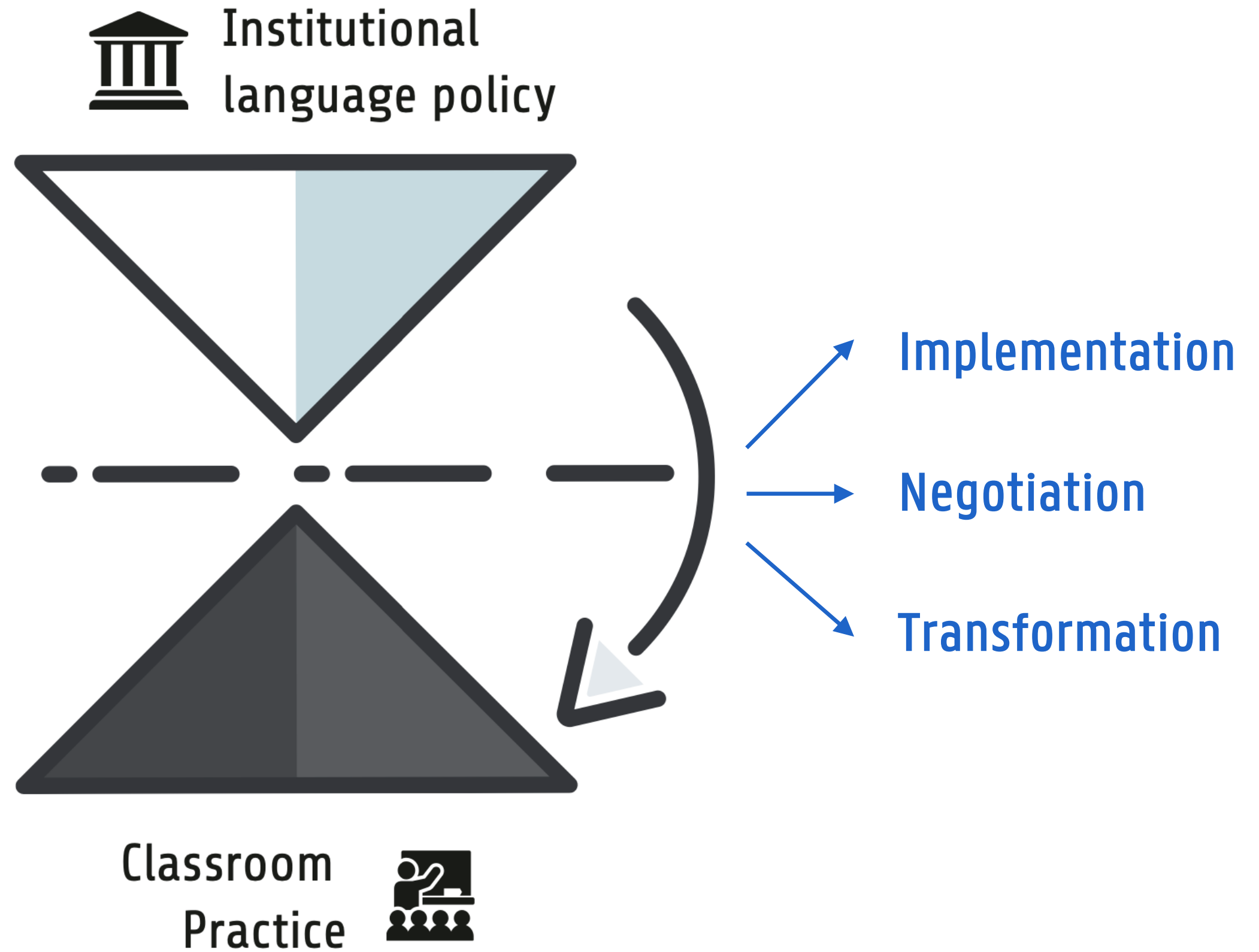
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STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY IN THE EMI CLASSROOM

– Street-level bureaucracy

- From study of public policy/administration
- Public service worker: intermediate position (policy & citizens)
- Operate with relative discretion
- “Discretionary actions” become policy
- Never a matter of “just” implementation, but also policy production



CONTEXT: INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

— Flemish Higher Education Institution

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- Dutch-medium instruction = norm

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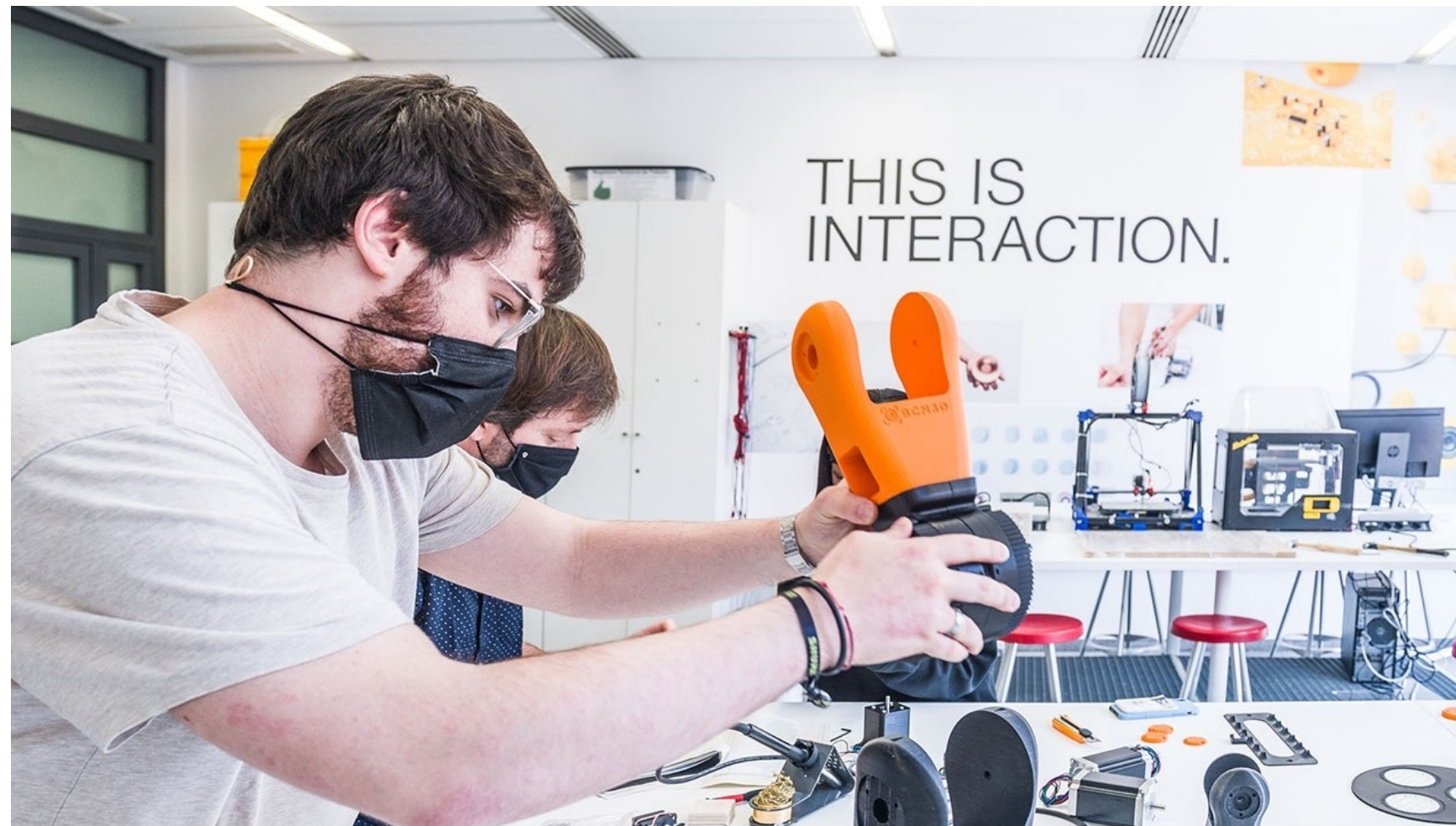
- Flemish Higher Education Institution
- Dutch-medium instruction = norm
- EMI courses and programs (with restrictions)
- **Multilingual communicative competence**

CONTEXT: INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

- Flemish Higher Education Institution
- Dutch-medium instruction = norm
- EMI courses and programs (with restrictions)
- Multilingual communicative competence
- **“Separate monolingualisms”**

DATA EXCERPT: CONTEXT

— English-medium industrial design engineering course



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- English-medium industrial design engineering course
- Seasoned EMI lecturer

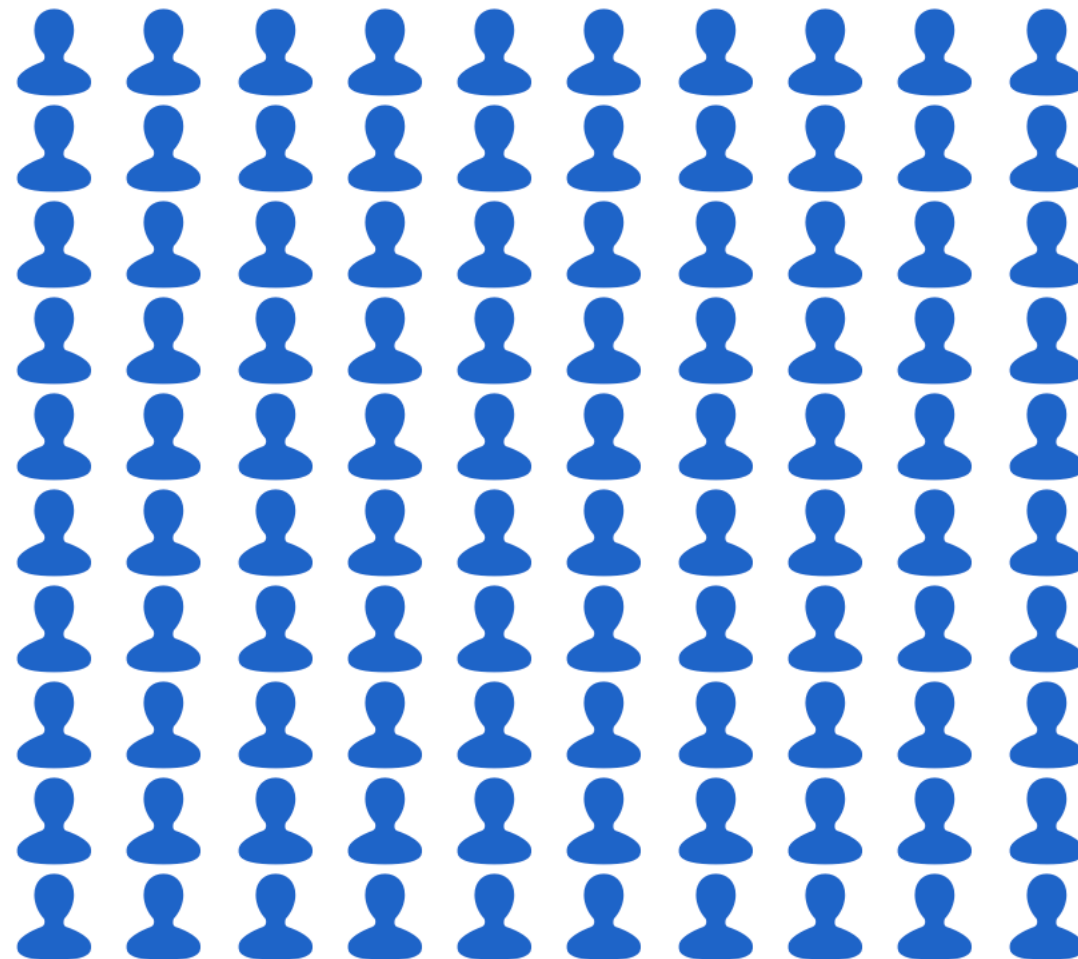
NAME	COURSES	FUNCTION	ROLE	EMI EXPERIENCE	C1 CERTIFICATION
Bio-engineering lecturer 1	BIO 1, 2, 3	Professor	Coordinating teacher	24 years	ITACE
Bio-engineering lecturer 2	BIO 1, 2, 3	Lecturer	Supporting teacher, coach	12 years	None
Bio-engineering lecturer 3	BIO 3	Professor	Coordinating teacher, coach	6 years	ITACE
Design engineering lecturer 1	DESIGN 1	Professor	Coordinating teacher, coach	9 years	ITACE
Design engineering lecturer 2	DESIGN 1	Professor	Supporting teacher, coach	12 years	IELTS
Design engineering lecturer 3	DESIGN 1	PhD student	Supporting teacher, coach	5 years	None

DATA EXCERPT: CONTEXT

- English-medium industrial design engineering course
- Seasoned EMI lecturer
- **Audience: domestic + international students**

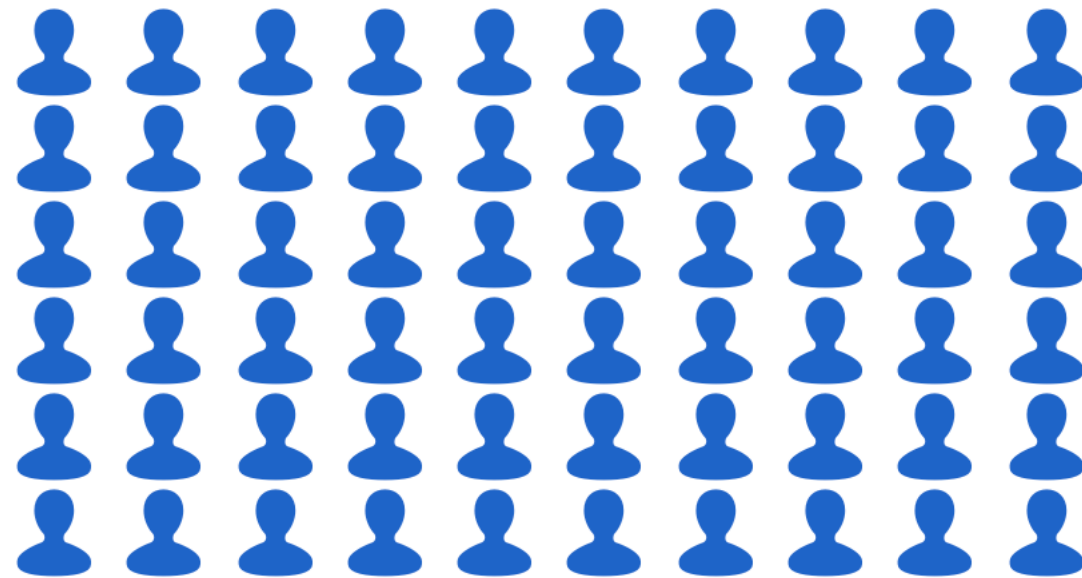
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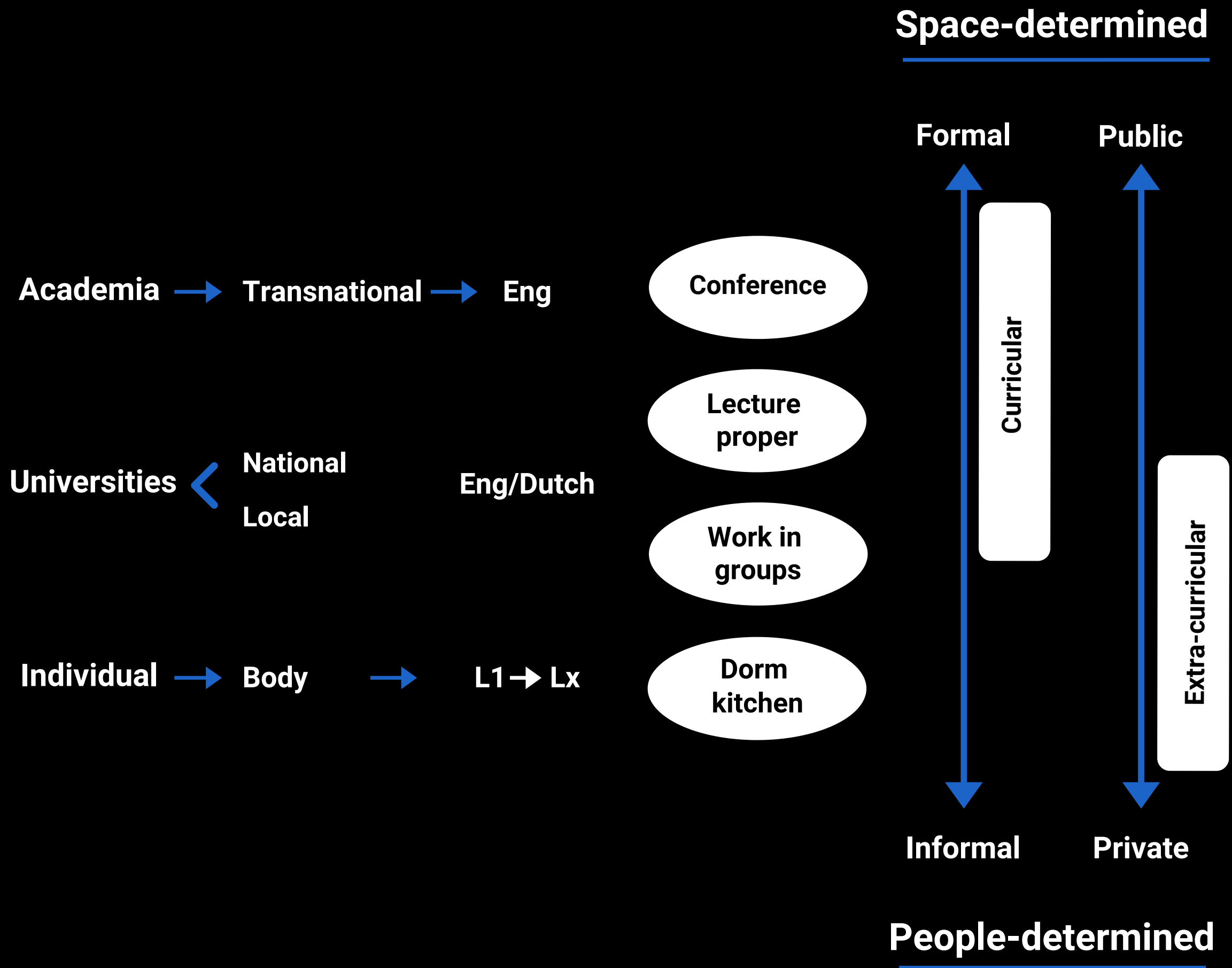
CONCLUSION

– Negotiation sequences:

- Often located at/around frame transition
- About making explicit activity-bound interactional expectations
- Set the scene for and manage translanguaging practices
- Open in terms of initiation, closed in terms of supervision
- Lecturer = local EMI policy maker

CONCLUSION

- Negotiation = a decision-making process:
 - Expectations of **place & activity** (cf. **multilingualism**)
 - **Individual** repertoires of interactants (cf. **plurilingualism**)



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