Are grammatical illusions illusions?
Keynote Julie Franck, University of Geneva

The starting point of my talk is the questioning of the notion of illusion applied to grammar. I will argue that it fundamentally differs from perceptual illusions, and relies on the non-trivial assumption of a mismatch between a ‘transient’ representation (generated on-line) and an ‘entrenched’ one (binary grammar rules). I will explore evidence questioning that assumption, starting by highlighting that language behavior in regard to agreement, one of the most prototypical examples of binary grammar rules, is actually far from binary. Then, I will pinpoint a lack of coherence in the way our community (including myself) conceptualizes two structures presumed to be ungrammatical: agreement errors and weak islands. Islands are one of the most prototypical examples of gradient processing, but I will report evidence that even though gradience is indeed there, it is not everywhere. Finally, I will sketch a possible view of grammar in which the transient and entrenched representations are one, and grammatical illusions are the reality of the inner workings of our mental grammar.